



DELHI UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Cl. No. *01/1742 X*

E91

Ac. No. *52*

Date of release for loan

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below. An overdue charge of 0.5 nP. will be charged for each day the book is kept overtime.

NOTE

THIS volume includes (1) the contents of the three-volume edition of Browning's poems published in 1863; (2) *Pauline*, taken from the first edition (1833); (3) the contents of the second edition of the 1864 volume entitled *Dramatis Personae*; (4) two short poems, a *Sonnet* and *Ben Karshook's Wisdom*, not reprinted by Browning in any collected edition of his poems; (5) *Orpheus and Eurydice*, which appeared first in the Royal Academy Catalogue for 1864; and (6) *Deaf and Dumb*, a poem which appeared in Vol. VI of the six-volume edition of 1868. A few obvious misprints have been corrected, and the 'elucidatory headings' to *Sordello*, which first appeared in the edition of 1863, have been discarded, in accordance with Browning's own omission of them in the final edition of his poems (1889). No other alterations have been made in the text.

[Dedication to the three volumes of 1863.]

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES

TO MY OLD FRIEND

JOHN FORSTER,

GLAD AND GRATEFUL THAT HE WHO, FROM THE FIRST
PUBLICATION OF THE VARIOUS POEMS THEY INCLUDE,
HAS BEEN THEIR PROMPTTEST AND STAUCHEST HELPER,
SHOULD SEEM EVEN NEARER TO ME NOW THAN
THIRTY YEARS AGO.

R. B.

London, *April* 21, 1863

CONTENTS

LYRICS

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| CAVALIER TUNES. | |
| I. MARCHING ALONG | 1 |
| II. GIVE A ROUSE | 1 |
| III. BOOT AND SADDLE | 2 |
| THE LOST LEADER 9 | 2 |
| HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX 22 | 3 |
| THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR | 4 |
| NATIONALITY IN DRINKS | 5 |
| GARDEN FANCIES. | |
| I. THE FLOWER'S NAME | 5 |
| II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS | 6 |
| SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER | 7 |
| THE LABORATORY | 8 |
| THE CONFESSIONAL | 9 |
| CRISTINA | 10 |
| THE LOST MISTRESS | 11 |
| EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES | 11 |
| MEETING AT NIGHT | 12 |
| PARTING AT MORNING | 12 |
| SONG | 12 |
| A WOMAN'S LAST WORD | 12 |
| EVELYN HOPE | 13 |
| LOVE AMONG THE RUINS | 14 |
| A LOVERS' QUARREL | 15 |
| UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY | 17 |
| A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S | 18 |
| OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE | 20 |
| 'DE GUSTIBUS—' | 25 |
| HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD 4 | 25 |
| HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA | 26 |
| SAUL x | 26 |
| MY STAR | 33 |
| BY THE FIRE-SIDE 9 | 33 |

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND | 37 |
| TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA | 40 |
| MISCONCEPTIONS | 41 |
| A SERENADE AT THE VILLA | 41 |
| ONE WAY OF LOVE | 42 |
| ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE | 42 |
| A PRETTY WOMAN | 42 |
| RESPECTABILITY | 44 |
| LOVE IN A LIFE | 44 |
| LIFE IN A LOVE | 44 |
| IN THREE DAYS | 44 |
| IN A YEAR | 45 |
| WOMEN AND ROSES | 46 |
| BEFORE | 47 |
| AFTER | 48 |
| THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL—A PICTURE AT FANO | 48 |
| MEMORABILIA | 49 |
| POPULARITY | 49 |
| MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA | 50 |

ROMANCES

| | |
|--|----|
| INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP | 53 |
| THE PATRIOT—AN OLD STORY | 53 |
| MY LAST DUCHESS—FERRARA | 54 |
| COUNT GISMOND—AIX IN PROVENCE | 55 |
| THE BOY AND THE ANGEL | 57 |
| INSTANS TYRANNUS | 58 |
| MESMERISM | 59 |
| THE GLOVE | 60 |
| TIME'S REVENGES | 63 |
| THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND | 64 |
| THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY—PIANO DI SORRENTO | 65 |
| IN A GONDOLA | 69 |
| WARING | 72 |
| THE TWINS | 75 |
| A LIGHT WOMAN | 75 |
| THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER | 76 |
| THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN; A CHILD'S STORY | 78 |
| THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS | 82 |
| A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL | 96 |

CONTENTS

vii

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION | 98 |
| THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY—A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE | 98 |
| HOLY-CROSS DAY | 100 |
| PROTUS | 103 |
| THE STATUE AND THE BUST | 104 |
| PORPHYRIA'S LOVER | 107 |
| 'CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME' | 108 |

MEN, AND WOMEN

| | |
|--|-----|
| 'TRANSCENDENTALISM:' A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS | 112 |
| HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY | 113 |
| ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES | 115 |
| AN EPISTLE CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN. | 117 |
| PICTOR IGNOTUS | 122 |
| FRA LIPPO LIPPI | 123 |
| ANDREA DEL SARTO | 130 |
| SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH | 134 |
| BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY | 136 |
| CLEON | 153 |
| RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI | 158 |
| ONE WORD MORE | 159 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| SONNET | 163 |
| BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM | 163 |
| ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE—A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON | 163 |

TRAGEDIES AND OTHER PLAYS

| | |
|--|-----|
| PIPPA PASSES—A DRAMA | 164 |
| KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES—A TRAGEDY | 190 |
| THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES—A TRAGEDY | 220 |
| A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTOHEON—A TRAGEDY | 252 |
| COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY—A PLAY | 277 |
| LURIA—A TRAGEDY | 312 |
| A SOUL'S TRAGEDY | 343 |
| IN A BALCONY—A SCENE | 359 |
| STRAFFORD—A TRAGEDY | 374 |

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| PAULINE | 415 |
| PARACELSUS | 432 |
| CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY | 499 |
| SORDELLO | 527 |

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

| | |
|--|-----|
| JAMES LEE | 619 |
| GOLD HAIR: A STORY OF PORNIC | 624 |
| THE WORST OF IT | 627 |
| DIS ALITER VISUM; OR, LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS | 629 |
| TOO LATE | 631 |
| ABT VOGLER | 634 |
| RABBI BEN EZRA | 636 |
| A DEATH IN THE DESERT | 639 |
| CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND | 650 |
| CONFESSIONS | 655 |
| MAY AND DEATH | 656 |
| PROSPICE | 656 |
| YOUTH AND ART | 657 |
| A FACE | 658 |
| A LIKENESS | 658 |
| MR. SLUDGE, 'THE MEDIUM' | 659 |
| APPARENT FAILURE | 685 |
| EPILOGUE | 686 |
| DEAF AND DUMB—A GROUP BY WOOLNER | 688 |
| NOTE TO PARACELSUS | 689 |
| INDEX TO FIRST LINES | 694 |

POEMS (1833-1868)

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

In this Volume [pp. 1-162 of this edition] are collected and redistributed the pieces first published in 1842, 1845, and 1855, respectively, under the titles of 'Dramatic Lyrics,' 'Dramatic Romances,' and 'Men and Women.'

Part of these were inscribed to my dear friend John Kenyon: I hope the whole may obtain the honour of an association with his memory.

R. B. [1863.]

LYRICS

CAVALIER TUNES¹

I. MARCHING ALONG

I

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament
swing:

And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest
folk droop,

Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this
song.

II

God for King Charles! Pym and such
carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their
treasonous parles!

Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor
sup

Till you're—

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score
strong,*

*Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song.*

III

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies'
knell

Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young
Harry as well!

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we no
here

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score
strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song?*

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and ^h
his snarls

To the Devil that pricks on such pesti-
lent carles! *rough country fellow*

Hold by the right, you double your
might;

So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the
fight,

(Chorus) *March we along, fifty-score
strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song!*

II. GIVE A ROUSE

I

King Charles, and who'll do him right
now?

King Charles, and who's ripe for fight
now?

Give a rouse: hero's, in Hell's despite
now,

King Charles!

¹ Such Poems as the majority in this volume [pp. 1-162 of this edition] might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of 'Dramatic Pieces'; being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.—R. B.

II

Who gave me the goods that went since ?
Who raised me the house that sank
once ?

Who helped me to gold I spent since ?
Who found me in wine you drank once ?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do
him right now ?*

*King Charles, and who's ripe
for fight now ?*

*Give a rouse : here's in
Hell's despite now,*

King Charles !

III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him ?

For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do
him right now ?*

*King Charles, and who's ripe
for fight now ?*

*Give a rouse : here's, in
Hell's despite now,*

King Charles !

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day

Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,
(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away !*

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd
say ;

Many's the friend there, will listen and
pray

'God's luck to gallants that strike up,
the lay—

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away !*

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Round-

heads' array :

Who laughs, 'Good fellows ere this, by
my fay,

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away !*

IV

Who ? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest
and gay,

Laughs when you talk of surrendering,
'Nay !

I've better counsellors ; what counsel
they ?

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and
away !*

THE LOST LEADER

I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—

Found the one gift of which fortune
'bereft us,

Lost all the others she lets us devote ;
They, with the gold to give, doled him

out silver,

So much was theirs who so little
allowed :

How all our copper had gone for his
service !

Rags—were they purple, his heart
had been proud !

We that had loved him so, followed him,
honoured him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his

clear accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to
die !

Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for
us,

Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they
watch from their graves !

He alone breaks from the van and the
freemen,

He alone sinks to the rear and the
slaves !

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro'
his presence ;

Songs may inspire us,—not from his
lyre ;

Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his
quiescence,

Still bidding crouch whom the rest
bade aspire :

Blot out his name, then, record one lost
soul more,

One task more declined, one more foot-
path untrod,
One more triumph for devils and sorrow
for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more
insult to God !
Life's night begins : let him never come
back to us !
There would be doubt, hesitation
and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer
of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again !
Best fight on well, for we taught him,—
strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his
own ;
Then let him receive the new knowledge
and wait us,
Pardoned in Heaven, the first by the
throne !

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD
NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX '
[16—]

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and
he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped
all three ;
'Good speed !' cried the watch, as the
gate-bolts undrew ;
'Speed !' echoed the wall to us gallop-
ing through ;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank
to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped
abreast.

II

Not a word to each other : we kept the
great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never
changing our place ;
I turned in my saddle and made its
girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the
pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained
slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland &
whit.

III

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while
we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight
dawned clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out
to see ;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as
could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we
heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, 'Yet there
is time !'

IV

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the
sun,
And against him the cattle stood black
every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping
past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at
last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting
away
The haze, as some bluff river headland
its spray.

V

And his low head and crest, just one
sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out
on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever
that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own
master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes
which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in gallop-
ing on.

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried
Joris, 'Stay spur !
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's
not in her,
We'll remember at Aix '—for one heard
the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and
staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the
flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered
and sank.

VII

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud
in the sky ;

The broad sun above laughed a pitiless
laugh,

'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright
stubble like chaff ;

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang
white,

And 'Gallop,' gasped Joris, 'for Aix is
in sight !'

VIII

'How they'll greet us!'—and all in a
moment his roan

Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as
a stone ;

And there was my Roland to bear the
whole weight

Of the news which alone could save Aix
from her fate,

With his nostrils like pits full of blood
to the brim,

And with circles of red for his eye-
sockets' rim.

IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each
holster let fall,

Shook off both my jack-boots, let go
belt and all,

Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted
his ear,

Called my Roland his pet-name, my
horse without peer ;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang,
any noise, bad or good,

Till at length into Aix Roland galloped
and stood.

X

And all I remember is, friends flocking
round

As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees
on the ground ;

And no voice but was praising this
Roland of mine,

As I poured down his throat our last
measure of wine,

Which (the burgesses voted by common
consent)

Was no more than his due who brought
good news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-
EL-KADR

1842

I

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,

As I ride, as I ride,
'That, as I were double-eyed,

He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried

As I ride, as I ride.

II

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride

As I ride, as I ride ?
Or are witnesses denied—

Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied

As I ride, as I ride ?

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,

The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)

O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied ?)

To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,

Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,

Shows where sweat has sprung and
dried,

—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride

As I ride as I ride !

V

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,

Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)

All that's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride

Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

I

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
 Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
 That serve this pond's black face for
 mask;
 And still at yonder broken edges
 Of the-hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
 After my heart I look and listen.

II

Our laughing little flask, compell'd
 Thro' depth to depth more bleak and
 shady;
 As when, both arms beside her held,
 Feet straightened out, some gay
 French lady
 Is caught up from life's light and
 motion,
 And dropped into death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
 Like a pygmy castle-warder,
 Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
 Arms and accoutrements all in order;
 And fierce he looked North, then,
 wheeling South,
 Blew with his bugle a challenge to
 Drouth,
 Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-
 feather,
 Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
 Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
 Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
 And then, with an impudence nought
 could abash,
 Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the
 beholder,
 For twenty such knaves he should laugh
 but the bolder:
 And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly
 jutting,
 And dexter-hand on his haunch abut-
 ting,
 Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch,
 strutting!

Here's to Nelson's memory!
 'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
 Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
 Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
 Nelson for ever—any time
 Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!

Give me of Nelson only a touch,
 And I save it, be it little or much:
 Here's one our Captain gives, and so
 Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
 He says that at Greenwich they point
 the beholder
 To Nelson's coat, 'still with tar on the
 shoulder,
 For he used to lean with one shoulder
 digging,
 Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
 Up against the mizen-rigging!

GARDEN FANCIES

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME

I

HERE's the garden she walked across,
 Arm in my arm, such a short while
 since:
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
 Hinders the hinges and makes them
 wince!
 She must have reached this shrub ere
 she turned,
 As back with that murmur the wicket
 swung;
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance
 foot spurned,
 To feed and forget it the leaves
 among.

II

Down this side of the gravel-walk
 She went while her robe's edge
 brushed the box:
 And here she paused in her gracious talk
 To point me a moth on the milk-
 white phlox.
 Roses, ranged in valiant row,
 I will never think that she passed you
 by!
 She loves you noble roses, I know;
 But yonder, see, where the rock-
 plants lie!

III

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
 Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its
 claim;
 Till she gave me, with pride to make no
 slip,
 Its soft meandering Spanish name:

What a name ! was it love, or praise ?
Speech half-asleep, or song half-
awake ?

I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase ;
But do not detain me now ; for she
lingers

There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

V

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you
grow not,

Stay as you are and be loved for ever !
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens
never !

For while thus it pouts, her fingers
wrestle,

Twinkling the audacious leaves be-
tween,

Till round they turn and down they
nestle—

Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

VI

Where I find her not, beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed
it with me ?

Come, bud, show me the least of her
traces,

Treasure my lady's lightest footfall

—Ah, you may flout and turn up your
faces—

Roses, you are not so fair after all !

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I

Plague take all your pedants, say I !

He who wrote what I hold in my
hand,

Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the
land ;

This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-
prime

Just when the birds sang all together.

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.

Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stone-
henge ;

Added up the mortal amount ;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but
sage ;

For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,

Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
When he'd be private, there might
he spend

Hours alone in his lady's chamber ;
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—I knew at the bottom rain-drip-
pings stagnate ;

Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's
magnate ;

Then I went indoors, brought out a
loaf,

Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis ;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in
limbo,

A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms
akimbo :

So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lacticis*,
Cantate ! quoth I, as I got a rake,
And up I fished his delectable trea-
sire.

VI

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
 With all the binding all of a blister,
 And great blue spots where the ink has
 run,
 And reddish streaks that wink and
 glister
 O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
 Oh, well have the droppings played
 their tricks!
 Did he guess how toadstools grow, this
 fellow?
 Here's one stuck in his chapter-six!

VII

How did he like it when the live
 creatures
 Ticked and toused and browsed him
 all over,
 And worm, slug, eft, with serious
 features,
 Came in, each one, for his right of
 trover?
 —When the water-beetle with great
 blind deaf face
 Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
 And the newt borrowed just so much of
 the preface
 As tiled in the top of his black wife's
 closet?

VIII

All that life and fun and romping,
 All that frisking and twisting and
 coupling,
 While slowly our poor friend's leaves
 were swamping
 And clasps were cracking and covers
 suppling!
 As if you had carried sour John Knox
 To the play-house at Paris, Vienna
 or Munich,
 Fastened him into a front-row box,
 And danced off the ballet with
 trousers and tunic.

IX

Come, old martyr! What, torment
 enough is it?
 Back to my room shall you take your
 sweet self!
 Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft,
sufficit!
 See the snug niche I have made on
 my shelf.

A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall
 cover you,
 Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to
 be gay,
 And with E. on each side, and F. right
 over you,
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-
 day!

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH
CLOISTER

I

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhor-
 rence!
 Water your damned flower-pots, do!
 If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill you!
 What? your myrtle-bush wants trim-
 ming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims—
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames!

II

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for 'parsley'?
 What's the Greek name for Swine's
 Snout?

III

Whew! We'll have our platter bur-
 nished,
 Laid with care on our own shelf!
 With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself,
 Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—
 Marked with L. for our initial!
 (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank,
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horse-
 hairs,
 —Can't I see his dead eye glow,
 Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
 (That is, if he'd let it show!)

V

When he finishes refection,
 Knife and fork he never lays
 Cross-wise, to my recollection,
 As do I, in Jesu's praise.
 I, the Trinity illustrate,
 Drinking watered orange-pulp—
 In three sips the Arian frustrate;
 While he drains his at one gulp!

VI

Oh, those melons! If he's able
 We're to have a feast; so nice!
 One goes to the Abbot's table,
 All of us get each a slice.
 How go on your flowers? None
 double?
 Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
 Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
 Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII

There's a great text in Galatians,
 Once you trip on it, entails
 Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
 One sure, if another fails:
 If I trip him just a-dying,
 Sure of Heaven as sure as can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to Hell, a Manichee?

VIII

Or, my scrofulous French novel
 On grey paper with blunt type!
 Simply glance at it, you grovel
 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
 If I double down its pages
 At the woeful sixteenth print,
 When he gathers his greengages,
 Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

IX

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
 Such a flaw in the indenture
 As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia
 We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine...*
 'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratia*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r—-you swine!

THE LABORATORY

[ANCIEN RÉGIME]

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask
 tightly,
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curl-
 ing whitely,
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-
 smithy—
 Which is the poison to poison her,
 prithee?

II

He is with her; and they know that I
 know
 Where they are, what they do: they
 believe my tears flow
 While they laugh, laugh at me, at me
 fled to the drear
 Empty church, to pray God in, for
 them!—I am here.

III

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy
 paste,
 Pound at thy powder,—I am not in
 haste!
 Better sit thus, and observe thy strange
 things,
 Than go where men wait me and dance
 at the King's.

IV

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
 Ah, the brave tree whence such gold
 oozings come!
 And yonder soft phial, the exquisite
 blue,
 Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison
 too?

V

Had I but all of them, thee and thy
 treasures,
 What a wild crowd of invisible plea-
 sures!
 To carry pure death in an earring, a
 casket,
 A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

VI

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to
 give
 And Pauline should have just thirty
 minutes to live!
 But to light a pastille, and Elise, with
 her head
 And her breast and her arms and her
 hands, should drop dead!

VII

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too
 grim!
 Why not soft like the phial's, enticing
 and dim?
 Let it brighten her drink, let her turn
 it and stir,
 And try it and taste, ere she fix and
 prefer!

VIII

What a drop! She's not little, no
 minion like me—
 That's why she ensnared him: this
 never will free
 The soul from those masculine eyes,—
 say, 'no'!
 To that pulse's magnificent come-and-
 go.

IX

For only last night, as they whispered,
 I brought
 My own eyes to bear on her so, that I
 thought
 Could I keep them one half minute fixed,
 she would fall,
 Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does
 it all!

X

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!
 Let death be felt and the proof remain;
 Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
 He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay,
 be not morose
 It kills her, and this prevents seeing it
 close:
 The delicate droplet, my whole for-
 tune's fee—
 If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt
 me?

XII

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to
 your fill,
 You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth
 if you will!
 But brush this dust off me, lest horror
 it brings
 Ere I know it—next moment I dance
 at the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL

[SPAIN]

I

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
 Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or
 hope
 Are lies, and lies—there! through my
 door
 And ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
 There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
 'Till spite of them I reach the world!

II

You think Priests just and holy men!
 Before they put me in this den
 I was a human creature too,
 With flesh and blood like one of you,
 A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
 Like lilies in your world outside.

III

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
 This poor wrenched body, grim and
 gaunt,
 Was kissed all over till it burned,
 By lips the truest, love e'er turned
 His heart's own tint: one night they
 kissed
 My soul out in a burning mist.

IV

So, next day when the accustomed
 train
 Of things grew round my sense again,
 'That is a sin,' I said: and slow
 With downcast eyes to church I go,
 And pass to the confession-chair,
 And tell the old mild father there.

V

But when I falter Beltran's name,
 'Ha?' quoth the father; 'much I
 blame

The sin ; yet wherefore idly grieve ?
Despair not,—strenuously retrieve !
Nay, I will turn this love of thine
To lawful love, almost divine.

VI

For he is young, and led astray,
This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
To change the laws of church and state ;
So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII

For, when he lies upon thy breast,
Thou may'st demand and be possessed
Of all his plans, and next day steal
To me, and all those plans reveal,
That I and every priest, to purge
His soul, may fast and use the scourge.'

VIII

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed
bright ;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy,
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of Heaven or fear of Hell ;
And I lay listening in such pride !
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their
dreams ;
'And now make haste,' I said, 'to pray
The one spot from his soul away ;
To-night he comes, but not the same
Will look !' At night he never came.

XI

Nor next night : on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty ; something
drew

My steps into the street ; I knew
It led me to the market-place :
Where, lo, on high, the father's face !

XII

That horrible black scaffold drest,
That stapled block . . . God sink the
rest !
That head strapped back, that blind-
ing vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

XIII

No part in aught they hope or fear !
No Heaven with them, no Hell !—and
here,
No Earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and Man my cry,
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie !

CRISTINA

I

SHE should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her !
There are plenty . . . men, you call
such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found
them :
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round
them.

II

What ? To fix me thus meant nothing ?
But I can't tell (there's my weak-
ness)
What her look said !—no vile cant,
sure,
About 'need to strew the bleakness
Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
That the sea feels'—no 'strange
yearning
That such souls have, most to lavish
Where there's chance of least return-
ing.'

III

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God
knows !
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV

There are flashes struck from mid-
nights,

There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse
Which for once had play unstilled
Seems the sole work of a lifetime
That away the rest have trifled.

V

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly.
✓ Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages, ✓
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle ?

VI

Else it loses what it lived for
And eternally must lose it ;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it)
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you
whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together.

VII

Oh, observe ! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever :
Never fear but there's provision
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture !
— Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their cap-
ture.

VIII

Such am I : the secret's mine now !
She has lost me, I have gained her ;
Her soul's mine : and thus, grown
perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.

Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended ;
And then, come the next life quickly !
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS

I

ALL's over, then : does truth sound
bitter
As one at first believes ?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night
twitter
About your cottage eaves !

II

And the leaf-buds on the vine are
woolly,
I noticed that, to-day ;
One day more bursts them open fully
— You know the red turns grey.

III

To-morrow we meet the same then,
dearest ?
May I take your hand in mine ?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the
merest
Keep much that I'll resign :

IV

For each glance of that eye so bright
and black,
Though I keep with heart's endea-
vour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snow-
drops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever !—

V

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger ;
I will hold your hand but as long as all
may,
Or so very little longer !

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

FAME

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in
time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its
prime :

Spite of the sexton's browsing horse,
the sods
Have struggled through its binding
osier-rods ;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean
awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-
and-by ;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er
plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name
and date !

LOVE

So, the year's done with !
(*Love me for ever !*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour ;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever ;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(*Love me for ever !*)

MEETING AT NIGHT

I

THE grey sea and the long black land ;
And the yellow half-moon large and
low ;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy
sand.

II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp
scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and
fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to
each !

PARTING AT MORNING

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the
sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's
rim :
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG

I

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress ?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—
above her ?
Aught like this tress, see, and this
tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall ?

II

Because, you spend your lives in prais-
ing ;
To praise, you search the wide world
over :
So, why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—
above her ?
Above this tress, and this I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

I

LET'S contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep :
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep !

II

What so wild as words are ?
I and thou
In debate, as birds arc,
Hawk on bough !

III

See the creature stalking
While we speak !
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek !

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee ?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

V

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I !

VI

Be a god and hold me
With a charm !
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm !

VII

Teach me, only teach, Love !
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love.
Think thy thought—

VIII

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night :
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight :

X

—Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me !)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE

I

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
She plucked that piece of geranium-
flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
Little has yet been changed, I think :
The shutters are shut, no light may
pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's
chink.

II

Sixteen years old when she died !
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my
name ;
It was not her time to love ; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir, *called*
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of
her.

III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged
so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be
told ?
We were fellow mortals, nought
beside ?

IV

No, indeed ! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the
love.
I claim you still, for my own love's
sake !
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not
a few :
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant,
I shall say,
In the lower earth, in the years long
still,
That body and soul so pure and gay ?
Why your hair was amber, I shall
divine,
And your mouth of your own gera-
nium's red—
And what you would do with me, in
fine,
In the new life come in the old one's
stead.

VI

I have lived, I shall say, so much since
then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the
climes ;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full
scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me :
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
What is the issue ? let us see !

VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while !

My heart seemed full as it could hold—

There was place and to spare for the frank young smile

And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.

So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—

See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.

There, that is our secret ! go to sleep ;

You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

I

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles

Miles and miles

On the solitary pastures where our sheep

Half-asleep

Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop

As they crop—

II

Was the site once of a city great and gay,

(So they say)

Of our country's very capital, its prince

Ages since

Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far

Peace or war.

III

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,

As you see,

To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills

From the hills

Intersect and give a name to, (else they run

Into one)

IV

Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires

Up like fires

O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall Bounding all,

Made of marble, men might march on nor be prest.

Twelve abreast.

V

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass

Never was !

Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads

And embeds

Every vestige of the city, guessed alone, Stock or stone—

VI

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe

Long ago ;

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame

Struck them tame ;

And that glory and that shame alike, the gold

Bought and sold.

VII

Now,—the single little turret that remains

On the plains,

By the caper overrooted, by the gourd Overscored,

While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks

Through the chinks—

VIII

Marks the basement whence a tower, in ancient time

Sprang sublime,

And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced

As they raced,

And the monarch and his minions and his dames

Viewed the games.

IX

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve

Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling
 fleece
 In such peace,
 And the slopes and rills in undistin-
 guished grey
 Melt away—

X

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow
 hair
 Waits me there
 In the turret whence the charioteers
 caught soul
 For the goal,
 When the king looked, where she looks
 now, breathless, dumb
 Till I come.

XI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
 All the mountains topped with temples,
 all the glades'
 Colonnades,
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—
 and then,
 All the men !

XII

When I do come, she will speak not,
 she will stand,
 Either hand
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first
 embrace
 Of my face,
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and
 speech
 Each on each

XIII

In one year they sent a million fighters
 forth
 South and North,
 And they built their gods a brazen
 pillar high
 As the sky,
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in
 full force—
 Gold, of course.

XIV

Oh, heart ! oh, blood that freezes,
 blood that burns !
 Earth's returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and
 sin !
 Shut them in,
 With their triumphs and their glories
 and the rest.
 Love is best !

A LOVERS' QUARREL

I

Oh, what a dawn of day !
 How the March sun feels like May !
 All is blue again
 After last night's rain,
 And the South dries the hawthorn-
 spray.
 Only, my Love's away !
 I'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II

Runnels, which rilletts swell,
 Must be dancing down the dell
 With a foamy head
 On the beryl bed
 Paven smooth as a hermit's cell ;
 Each with a tale to tell,
 Could my Love but attend as well.

III

Dearest, three months ago !
 When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
 In, as far as the point could go—
 Not to our ingle, though,
 Where we loved each the other so !

IV

Laughs with so little cause !
 We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
 In the ash, as an artist draws ;
 Free on each other's flaws,
 How we chattered like two church
 daws !

V

What's in the 'Times' ?—a scold
 At the Emperor deep and cold ;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
 That's as fair as himself is bold :
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
 And she powders her hair with gold.

VI

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !
 Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
 And to break now and then the screen—
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
 Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII

Try, will our table turn ?
 Lay your hands there light, and yearn
 'Till the yearning slips
 Thro' the finger-tips
 In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
 And the rest, they may live and learn !

VIII

Then we would up and pace,
 For a change, about the place,
 Each with arm o'er neck :
 'Tis our quarter-deck,
 We are seamen in woeful case.
 Help in the ocean-space !
 Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX

See, how she looks now, drest
 In a sledging-cap and vest !
 'Tis a huge fur cloak—
 Like a reindeer's yoke
 Falls the lappet along the breast :
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X

Teach me to flirt a fan
 As the Spanish ladies can,
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
 And you turn into such a man !
 Just the two spots that span
 Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI

Dearest, three months ago
 When the mesmerizer Snow
 With his hand's first sweep
 Put the earth to sleep !
 'Twas a time when the heart could
 show
 All—how was earth to know,
 'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro ?

XII

Dearest, three months ago
 When we loved each other so,
 Lived and loved the same
 Till an evening came
 When a shaft from the Devil's bow
 Pierced to our ingle-glow,
 And the friends were friend and foe !

XIII

Not from the heart beneath—
 'Twas a bubble born of breath,
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,
 Nor reproach nor taunt.
 See a word, how it severeth !
 Oh, power of life and death
 In the 'tongue, as the Preacher saith !

XIV

Woman, and will you cast
 For a word, quite off at last
 Me, your own, your You,—
 Since, as truth is true,
 I was You all the happy Past—
 Me do you leave aghast
 With the memories We amassed ?

XV

Love, if you knew the light
 That your soul casts in my sight,
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true,
 And the beauteous and the right,—
 Bear with a moment's spite
 When a mere mote threatens the white !

XVI

What of a hasty word ?
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick ?
 See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred—
 Ear, when a straw is heard
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

XVII

Foul be the world or fair
 More or less, how can I care ?
 'Tis the world the same
 For my praise or blame,
 And endurance is easy there.
 Wrong in the one thing rare—
 Oh, it is hard to bear !

XVIII

Here's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows;
In that minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows:
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX

Then, were the world well stript
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI

Each in the crypt would cry
'But one freezes here! and why?
When a heart as chill
At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
Heart, shall we live or die?
The rest, . . . settle it by and by!'

XXII

So, she'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
It is twelve o'clock:
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar,
I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore!

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN
THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN
PERSON OF QUALITY)

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money
enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a
house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads
at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, some-
thing to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is
a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain
it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like
the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain's edge as bare as
the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly
a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see
if the hair's turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city—the square
with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd,
there's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a
single front awry!
You watch who crosses and gossips,
who saunters, who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to
draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which
are painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be
over in March by rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall
have withered well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before,
where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by
the faint grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? you've
summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few
strong April suns!
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat,
scarce risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows
out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for
the children to pick and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square ? There 's
 a fountain to spout and splash !
 In the shade it sings and springs ; in
 the shine such foam-bows flash
 On the horses with curling fish-tails,
 that prance and paddle and pash
 Round the lady atop in the conch—
 fifty gazers do not abash,
 Though all that she wears is some weeds
 round her waist in a sort of sash !

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing 's
 to see though you linger,
 Except yon cypress that points like
 Death's lean lifted forfinger.
 Some think fireflies pretty, when they
 mix in the corn and mingle,
 Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks
 of it seem a-tingle.
 Late August or early September, the
 stunning cicala is shrill,
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine
 round the resinous firs on the hill.
 Enough of the seasons,—I spare you
 the months of the fever and chill.

IX

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the
 blessed church-bells begin :
 No sooner the bells leave off, than the
 diligence rattles in :
 You get the pick of the news, and it
 costs you never a pin.
 By and by there's the travelling doctor
 gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth ;
 Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up
 the market beneath.
 At the post-office such a scene-picture
 —the new play, piping hot !
 And a notice how, only this morning,
 three liberal thieves were shot.
 Above it, behold the archbishop's most
 fatherly of rebukes,
 And beneath, with his crown and his
 lion, some little new law of the
 Duke's !
 Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the
 Reverend Don So-and-so
 Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca,
 Saint Jerome, and Cicero,

'And moreover,' (the sonnet goes rhym-
 ing,) 'the skirts of Saint Paul has
 reached,

Having preached us those six Lent
 lectures more unctuous than ever
 he preached.'

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the proces-
 sion ! our Lady borne smiling and
 smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles,
 and seven swords stuck in her
 heart !

Bang; whang, whang goes the drum,
tootle-te-tootle the fife ;

No keeping one's haunches still : it's
 the greatest pleasure in life.

X

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear !
 fowls, wine, at double the rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt,
 and what oil pays passing the gate
 It's a horror to think of. And so, the
 villa for me, not the city !

Beggars can scarcely be choosers : but
 still—ah, the pity, the pity !

Look, two and two go the priests, then
 the monks with cowls and sandals,
 And the penitents dressed in white
 shirts, a-holding the yellow candles :

One, he carries a flag up straight, and
 another a cross with handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the
 rear, for the better prevention of
 scandals :

Bang, whang, whang goes the drum,
tootle-te-tootle the fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no
 such pleasure in life !

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

I

Oh, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very
 sad to find !

I can hardly misconceive you ; it would
 prove me deaf and blind ;

But although I take your meaning, 'tis
 with such a heavy mind !

II

Here you come with your old music,
 and here 's all the good it brings.

What, they lived once thus at Venice
where the merchants were the
kings,

Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges
used to wed the sea with rings ?

III

Ay, because the sea's the street there ;
and 'tis arched by . . . what you
call

. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,
where they kept the carnival :

I was never out of England—it 's as if
I saw it all !

IV

Did young people take their pleasure
when the sea was warm in May ?

Balls and masks begun at midnight,
burning ever to mid-day

When they made up fresh adventures
for the morrow, do you say ?

V

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so
round and lips so red,—

On her neck the small face buoyant,
like a bell-flower on its bed,

O'er the breast's superb abundance
where a man might base his head ?

VI

Well, (and it was graceful of them)
they'd break talk off and afford

—She, to bite her mask's black velvet,
he, to finger on his sword,

While you sat and played Toccatas,
stately at the clavichord !

VII

What ? Those lesser thirds so plain-
tive, sixths diminished, sigh on
sigh,

Told them something ? Those suspen-
sions, those solutions—'Must we
die ?'

Those commiserating sevenths—'Life
might last ! we can but try !'

VIII

'Were you happy ?'—'Yes.'—'And are
you still as happy ?'—'Yes. And
you ?'

—'Then, more kisses !'—'Did I stop
them, when a million seemed so
few ?'

Hark ! the dominant's persistence, till
it must be answered to !

IX

So an octave struck the answer. Oh,
they praised you, I dare say !

'Brave Galuppi ! that was music ! good
alike at grave and gay !

I can always leave off talking, when I
hear a master play.'

X

Then they left you for their pleasure :
till in due time, one by one,

Some with lives that came to nothing,
some with deeds as well undone,

Death came tacitly and took them
where they never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think
to take my stand nor swerve,

While I triumph o'er a secret wrung
from nature's close reserve,

In you come with your cold music, till
I creep thro' every nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creak-
ing where a house was burned—

'Dust and ashes, dead and done with,
Venice spent what Venice earned !

The soul, doubtless, is immortal—
where a soul can be discerned.

XIII

Yours for instance, you know physics,
something of geology,

Mathematics are your pastime ; souls
shall rise in their degree ;

Butterflies may dread extinction,—
you'll not die, it cannot be !

XIV

As for Venice and its people, merely
born to bloom and drop,

Here on earth they bore their fruitage,
mirth and folly were the crop :

What of soul was left, I wonder, when
the kissing had to stop ?

XV

'Dust and ashes!' So you creak it,
and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too
—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms?
I feel chilly and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

I

THE morn when first it thunders in
March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they
say:
As I leaned and looked over the aloed
arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March
day,
No flash snap, no dumb thunder
rolled
In the valley beneath where, white
and wide
And washed by the morning's water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and
call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto
raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

III

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved
you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
Yet it feels, I would have your
fellows know!
I' faith, I perceive not why I should
care
To break a silence that suits them
best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to
bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curved leaf which they
never shed)
'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in
chief,
And mark through the winter after-
noons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like
moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her
men.

V

They might chirp and chaffer, come
and go
For pleasure or profit, her men
alive—
My business was hardly with them,
I trow,
But with empty cells of the human
hive;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-
porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face, set full for the sun to shave.

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and
wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-
tick pains!
One, withal each scrap should clutch
the brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the
plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient
Master.

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it
does!
They are safe in Heaven with their
backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum
and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little
wit!

Do their eyes contract to the earth's
old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reck of your praise and you !
But the wronged great souls—can
they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
Where you style them, you of the
little wit,
Old Master This and Early the Other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are
fellows :
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from
Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield
returns,
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff gins
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's Ape and the world's
despair
For his peerless painting ? (see
Vasari.)

X

There stands the Master. Study, my
friends,
What a man's work comes to ! so he
plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and then,
sic transit !
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
With upturned eye while the hand is
busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their
neighbour !
'Tis looking downward that makes
one dizzy.

XI

'If you knew their work you would
deal your dole.'
May I take upon me to instruct you ?
When Greek Art ran and reached the
goal,

Thus much had the world to boast
in fructu—
The truth of Man, as by God first
spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs
betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) made new
in marble.

XII

So, you saw yourself as you wished you
were,
As you might have been, as you
cannot be ;
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus
there :
And grew content in your poor
degree
With your little power, by those
statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes'
full sway,
And your little grace, by their graco
embodied,
And your little date, by their forms
that stay.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than
I am ?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You'd fain be a model ? the Son of
Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and
knees' use.
You're wroth—can you slay your
snake like Apollo ?
You're grieved—still Niobe's the
grander !
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to
follow :
You die—there's the dying Alex-
ander.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their
strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded
beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and
length,
You learned—to submit is a mortal's
duty.

—When I say 'you''tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in
a whole,
And grow here according to God's
clear plan.

xv

Growth came when, looking your last
on them all,

You turned your eyes inwardly one
fine day

And cried with a start—What if we so
small

Be greater and grander the while
than they!

Are they perfect of lineament, perfect
of stature?

In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

xvi

To-day's brief passion limits their
range;

It seethes with the morrow for us
and more.

They are perfect—how else? they shall
never change;

We are faulty—why not? we have
time in store.

The Artificer's hand is not arrested

With us—we are rough-hewn, no-
wise polished:

They stand for our copy, and, once
invested

With all they can teach, we shall see
them abolished.

xvii

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be
leaven—

The better! what's come to perfec-
tion perishes.

Things learned on earth, we shall prac-
tise in Heaven.

Works done least rapidly, Art most
cherishes.

Thyself shall afford the example,
Giotto!

Thy one work, not to decrease or
diminish,

Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?)
'O!

Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

xviii

Is it true that we are now, and shall be
hereafter,

But what and where depend on life's
minute?

Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?

Shall Man, such step within his en-
deavour,

Man's face, have no more play and
action

Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrification?

xix

On which I conclude, that the early
painters,

To cries of 'Greek Art and what more
wish you?'—

Replied, 'To become now self-acquain-
ters,

And paint man, man, whatever the
issue!

Make new hopes shine through the flesh
they fray,

New fears aggrandize the rags and
tatters:

To bring the invisible full into play!
Let the visible go to the dogs—what
matters?'

xx

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon
and glory

For daring so much, before they
well did it.

The first of the new, in our race's
story,

Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle
quiddit.

The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to
acknowledge,

Why, honour them now—(ends my
allocution)

Nor confer your degree when the
folks leave college.

xxi

There's a fancy some lean to and others
hate—

That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,

Where it strives and gets weary,
loses and wins;

Where the strong and the weak, this
world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised
in small,
Through life after life in unlimited
series ;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's
all.

XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has
seen
By the means of Evil that Good is
best,
And through earth and its noise, what
is Heaven's serene,—
When its faith in the same has stood
the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn
the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done :
There remaineth a rest for the people
of God,
And I have had troubles enough for
one.

XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and
dewy,
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
And painter—who but Cimabue ?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghir-
landajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-
meed.
So now to my special grievance—
heigh ho !

XXIV

Their ghosts now stand, as I said
before,
Watching each fresco flaked and
rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or white-
washed o'er
—No getting again what the church
has grasped !
The works on the wall must take their
chance ;
'Works never conceded to England's
thick clime !'
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a
shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly
Each master his way through the black
streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes
though badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who
has merited ?
Why not reveal, while their pictures
dree
Such doom, that a captive's to be out-
ferreted ?
Why is it they never remember me ?

XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric,
bellicose ;
Nor the wronged Lippino ; and not a
word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's :
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your into-
naco—
Some Jerome that seeks the Heaven
with a sad eye ?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII

Could not the ghost with the close red
cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the
draughtsman ?
No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crum-
bly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him
humbly ?

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and
swaddling barret,
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a
pet so,
You bald, old, saturnine, poll-clawed
parrot ?)

Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the
donor ?

If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little
honour.

XXIX

They pass : for them the panels may
thrill,

The tempera grow alive and ting-
lish—

Their pictures are left to the mercies
still

Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the
English,

Who, seeing mere money's worth in
their prize,

Will sell it to somebody calm as
Zeno

At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino !

XXX

No matter for these ! But Giotto,
you,

Have you allowed, as the town-
tongues babble it,—

Oh, never ! it shall not be counted
true—

That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—

Was buried so long in oblivion's
womb

And, left for another than I to discover,
Turns up at last ! and to whom ?—
to whom ?

XXXI

I, that have haunted the dim San
Spirito,

(Or was it rather the Ognissanti ?)

Patient on altar-steps planting a weary
toe !

Nay, I shall have it yet ! *detur
amanti !*

My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a plati-
tude)

Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's
eye !

So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and
prophesy ?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a
certain dotard

Is pitched, no parcel that needs in-
voicing.

To the worse side of the Mont Saint
Gothard,

We shall begin by way of rejoicing ;

None of that shooting the sky (blank
cartridge),

Nor a civic guard, all plumes and
lacquer,

Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we'll shoot better game and
bag 'em hot—

No mere display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of sober Witana-gemot

(Ex : 'Casa Guidi,' *quod videas ante*)

Shall ponder, once Freedom restored
to Florence,

How Art may return that departed
with her.

Go, hated house, go each trace of the
Lorraine's,

And bring us the days of Orgagna
hither !

XXXIV

How we shall prologuize, how we shall
perorate,

Utter fit things upon art and his-
tory—

Feel truth at blood-heat and the false
at a zero rate,

And make of the want of the age no
mystery !

Contrasting the fructuous and sterile
eras,

Show, monarchy ever its uncouth
cub licks

Out of the bear's shape into Chimae-
ra's—

While Pure Art's birth is still the
republic's !

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech
(court Tuscan,

Expurgate and sober, with scarcely
an 'issimo,')

To end now our half-told tale of Cam-
buscan,

And turn the Bell-tower's *alt* to
altissimo :
 And fine as the beak of a young be-
 caccia
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence,
 Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the
 scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent
 fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world,
 unbaflled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes
 the spire
 While, 'God and the People' plain for
 its motto,
 Thence the new tricolour flaps at the
 sky ?
 At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first
 am I !

'DE GUSTIBUS—'

I

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of
 trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with
 poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates
 please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they !
 Draw yourself up from the light of the
 moon,
 And let them pass, as they will too
 soon,
 With the beanflow'ers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June !

II

What I love best in all the world,
 Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apen-
 nine.
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,

(If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's
 bands,
 And come again to the land of lands)—
 In a sea-side house to the farther
 South,
 Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
 And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—
 stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-
 crusted,
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what ex-
 pands
 Before the house, but the great opaque
 Blue breadth of sea without a break ?
 While, in the house, for ever crumbles—
 Some fragment of the frescoes' walls,
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
 A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh
 melons,
 And says there's news to-day—the
 king
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a
 sling :
 —She hopes they have not caught the
 felons.

Italy, my Italy !
 Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her, Calais)
 Open my heart and you will see
 Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'
 Such lovers old are I and she ;
 So it always was, so shall ever be !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

I

OH, to be in England
 Now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-
 wood sheaf
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny
 leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard
 bough
 In England—now !

II

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the
swallows !

Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree
in the hedge

Leans to the field and scatters on the
clover

Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent
spray's edge—

That's the wise thrush; he sings each
song twice over,

Lest you should think he never could
recapture

The first fine careless rapture !

And though the fields look rough with
hoary dew,

All will be gay when noontide wakes
anew

The buttercups, the little children's
dower

—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-
flower !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE
SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to
the North-West died away ;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red,
reeking into Cadiz Bay ;

Bluish mid the burning water, full in
face Trafalgar lay ;

In the dimmest North-East distance,
dawned Gibraltar grand and gray ;

'Hore and hero did England help me :
how can I help England ?'—say,

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to
God to praise and pray,

While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent
over Africa.

SAUL

I

SAID Abner, 'At last thou art come !

Ere I tell, ere thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well !' Then
I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he, 'Since the King, O my friend,
for thy countenance sent,

Neither drunken nor eaten have we ;
nor until from his tent

Thou return with the joyful assurance
the King liveth yet,

Shall our lip with the honey be bright,
with the water be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence,
a space of three days,

Not a sound hath escaped to thy ser-
vants, of prayer or of praise,

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit
have ended their strife,

And that, faint in his triumph, the
monarch sinks back upon life.

II

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved !
God's child, with His dew

On thy gracious gold hair, and those
lilies still living and blue

Just broken to twine round thy harp-
strings, as if no wild heat

Were now raging to torture the desert !'

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers,

and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.

The tent was unlooped ;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed,

and under I stooped ;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-

patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure,

I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.

Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered,

and was not afraid,
But spoke, 'Here is David, thy ser-

vant !' And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the

blackness ; but soon I descried
A something more black than the

blackness—the vast the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion :

and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and

blackest of all :
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the

tent-roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop ;
both arms stretched out wide

On the great cross-support in the
centre, that goes to each side ;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung
there, as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-
serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine,
till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized
Saul, drear and stark, blind and
dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the
lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the
noontide—those sunbeams like
swords !
And I first played the tune all our
sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door,
till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the
bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water
within the stream's bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodging,
as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—
so blue and so far !

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on
the cornland will each leave his
mate
To fly after the player ; then, what
makes the crickets elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another :
and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing out-
side his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder,
half bird and half mouse !
God made all the creatures and gave
them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are His
children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our
reapers, their wine-song, when
hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good
friendship, and great hearts ex-
pand

And grow one in the sense of this
world's life.—And then, the last
song

When the dead man is praised on his
journey—'Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead
flowerets ! are balm-seeds not here
To console us ? The land has none left
such as he on the bier.

Oh, would we might keep thee, my
brother !'—And then, the glad
chaunt

Of the marriage,—first go the young
maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwell-
ing.—And then, the great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him
and buttress an arch

Nought can break ; who shall harm
them, our friends ?—Then, the
chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar in
glory enthroned.

But I stopped here—for here in the
darkness, Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such
silence, and listened apart ;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul
shuddered—and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban
at once with a start—

All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies
courageous at heart.

So the head—but the body still moved
not, still hung there erect.

And I bent once again to my playing,
pursued it unchecked,

As I sang,—

IX

'Oh, our manhood's prime vigour !
no spirit feels waste,

Not a muscle is stopped in its playing,
nor sinew unbraced.

Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping
from rock up to rock—

The strong rending of boughs from the
fir-tree,—the cool silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water,
—the hunt of the bear,

And the sultriness showing the lion is
couched in his lair.

And the meal—the rich dates yellowed
over with gold dust divine,
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the
pitcher! the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel
where bulrushes tell

That the water was wont to go warbling
so softly and well.

How good is man's life, the mere living!
how fit to employ

All the heart and the soul and the
senses, for ever in joy!

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy
father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the
armies, for glorious reward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy
mother, held up as men sung

The low song of the nearly-departed,
and heard her faint tongue

Joining in while it could to the witness,
'Let one more attest,

I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a
lifetime, and all was for best!

Then they sung thro' their tears in
strong triumph, not much—but
the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the con-
test, the working whence grew

Such result as, from seething grape-
bundles, the spirit strained true!

And the friends of thy boyhood—that
boyhood of wonder and hope,

Present promise, and wealth of the
future beyond the eye's scope,—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch;
a people is thine;

And all gifts, which the world offers
singly, on one head combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength,
love and rage (like the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its
labour and lets the gold go)

High ambition and deeds which surpass
it, fame crowning it,—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one
creature—King Saul!

x

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—
heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow,
each bidding rejoice

Saul's fame in the light it was made for
—as when, dare I say,

The Lord's army, in rapture of service,
strains through its array,

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—
'Saul!' cried I, and stopped,

And waited the thing that should
follow. Then Saul, who hung
propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre,
was struck by his name.

Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy
summons goes right to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to with-
stand her, that held (he alone,

While the vale laughed in freedom and
flowers) on a broad bust of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breast-
plate.—leaves grasp of the sheet?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds
thunderously down to his feet,

And there fronts you, stark, black, but
alive yet, your mountain of old,

With his rents, the successive bequeath-
ings of ages untold—

Yea, each harm got in fighting your
battles, each furrow and scar

Of his head thrust 'twixt you and
the tempest—all hail, there they
are!

Now again to be softened with verdure,
again hold the nest

Of the dove, tempt the goat and its
young to the green on its crest

For their food in the ardours of summer!
One long shudder thrilled

All the tent till the very air tingled,
then sank and was stilled

At the King's self left standing before
me, released and aware,

What was gone, what remained? all
to traverse 'twixt hope and de-
spair;

Death was past, life not come: so he
waited. Awhile his right hand

Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
vacant forthwith to remand

To their place what new objects should
enter: 'twas Saul as before.

I looked up and dared gaze at those
eyes, nor was hurt any more

Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn,
ye watch from the shore,

At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—
 a sun's slow decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern
 silence, o'erlap and entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more
 intense: so, arm folded in arm
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings
 subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within
 me) what next should I urge •
 To sustain him where song had restored
 him?—Song filled to the verge
 His cup with the wine of this life,
 pressing all that it yields
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and
 the beauty! Beyond, on what
 fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect
 to brighten the eye
 And bring blood to the lip, and com-
 mend them the cup they put by?
 He saith, 'It is good'; still he drinks
 not: he lets me praise life,
 (Gives assent, yet would die for his own
 part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
 Which had come long ago on the
 pastures, when round me the sheep
 Fed in silence—above, the one eagle
 wheeled slow as in sleep;
 And I lay in my hollow, and mused on
 the world that might lie
 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the
 strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
 And I laughed—'Since my days are
 ordained to be passed with my
 flocks,
 Let me people at least, with my fancies,
 the plains and the rocks,
 Dream the life I am never to mix with,
 and image the show
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions
 I hardly shall know!
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right
 uses, the courage that gains,
 And the prudence that keeps what
 men strive for.' And now these
 old trains

Of vague thought came again; I grew
 surer; so, once more the string
 Of my harp made response to my spirit,
 as thus—

XIII

'Yea, my King,'
 I began—'thou dost well in rejecting
 mere comforts that spring
 From the mere mortal life held in
 common by man and by brute:
 In our flesh grows the branch of this
 life, in our soul it bears fruit.
 Thou hast marked the slow rise of the
 tree,—how its stem trembled first
 Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's
 antler; then safely outburst
 The fan-branches all round; and thou
 mindedst when these too, in turn
 Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed
 perfect: yet more was to learn,
 Ev'n the good that comes in with the
 palm-fruit. Our dates shall we
 slight,
 When their juice brings a cure for all
 sorrow? or care for the plight
 Of the palm's self whose slow growth
 produced them? Not so! stem
 and branch
 Shall decay, nor be known in their
 place, while the palm-wine shall
 staunch
 Every wound of man's spirit in winter.
 I pour thee such wine.
 Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit
 for! the spirit be thine!
 By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome
 thee, thou still shalt enjoy
 More indeed, than at first when in-
 conscious, the life of a boy.
 Crush that life, and behold its wine
 running! each deed thou hast done
 Dies, revives, goes to work in the world;
 until e'en as the sun
 Looking down on the earth, though
 clouds spoil him, though tempests
 efface,
 Can find nothing his own deed produced
 not, must everywhere trace
 The results of his past summer-prime,—
 so, each ray of thy will,
 Every flash of thy passion and prowess,
 long over, shall thrill

Thy whole people the countless, with
ardour, till they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn,
fill the South and the North
With the radiance thy deed was the
germ of. Carouse in the Past!
But the license of age has its limit;
thou diest at last:
As the lion when age dims his eyeball,
the rose at her height,
So with man—so his power and his
beauty for ever take flight.
No! again a long draught of my soul-
wine! look forth o'er the years—
Thou hast done now with eyes for the
actual; begin with the seer's!
Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale
make his tomb—bid arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-
square, till, built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King
slumbers: whose fame would ye
know?
Up above see the rock's naked face,
where the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—
Such was Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by
the populace chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is com-
prised there! Which fault to
amend,
In the grove with his kind grows
the cedar, whereon they shall
spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them)
their praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's
story,—the statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet com-
ment. The river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each
other when prophet-winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations
their due and their part
In thy being! Then, first of the
mighty, thank God that thou art!

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou
who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted
Thy help to essay

Carry on and complete an adventure,—
my Shield and my Sword
In that act where my soul was Thy
servant, Thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the sum-
mit of human endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought
could, gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of Heaven above
me—till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of Thy hand cleared that
distance—God's throne from man's
'grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—
my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what
marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments,
alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory
evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert,
while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his
shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sun-
shine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch,
and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him
—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly.
The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted com-
posure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat
that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he
girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price,
with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere
error had bent
The broad brow from the daily com-
munion; and still, though much
spent
Be the life and the bearing that front
you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste,
desecrate, never quite lose.

So sank he along by the tent-prop till,
 stayed by the pile
 Of his armour and war-cloak and
 garments, he leaned there awhile,
 And so sat out my singing,—one arm
 round the tent-prop, to raise
 His bent head, and the other hung
 slack—till I touched on the praise
 I foresaw from all men in all times, to
 the man patient there ;
 And thus ended, the harp falling for-
 ward. Then first I was 'ware
 That he sat, as I say, with my head
 just above his vast knees
 Which were thrust out on each side
 around me, like oak roots which
 please
 To encircle a lamb when it slumbers.
 I looked up to know
 If the best I could do had brought
 solace : he spoke not, but slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till
 he laid it with care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will,
 on my brow : thro' my hair
 The large fingers were pushed, and he
 bent back my head, with kind
 power—
 All my face back, intent to peruse it,
 as men do a flower.
 Thus held he me there with his great
 eyes that scrutinized mine—
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him !
 but where was the sign ?
 I yearned—'Could I help thee, my
 father, inventing a bliss,
 I would add to that life of the Past, both
 the Future and this ;
 I would give thee new life altogether,
 as good, ages hence,
 As this moment,—had love but the
 warrant, love's heart to dispense !'

xvi

Then the truth came upon me. No harp
 more—no song more ! outbroke—

xvii

I have gone the whole round of Crea-
 tion : I saw and I spoke !
 I, a work of God's hand for that pur-
 pose, received in my brain
 And pronounced on the rest of His
 handwork—returned Him again

His creation's approval or censure : I
 spoke as I saw.]
 I report, as a man may of God's work
 —all's love, yet all's law !
 Now I lay down the judgeship He lent
 me. Each faculty tasked
 To perceive Him, has gained an abyss,
 where a dewdrop was asked.
 Have I knowledge ? confounded it
 shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
 Have I forethought ? how purblind,
 how blank, to the Infinite Care !
 Do I task any faculty highest, to image
 success ?
 I but open my eyes,—and perfection,
 no more and no less,
 In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me,
 and God is seen God
 In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in
 the soul and the clod.
 And thus looking within and around
 me, I ever renew
 (With that stoop of the soul which in
 bending upraises it too)
 The submission of Man's nothing-
 perfect to God's All-Complete,
 As by each new obeisance in spirit,
 I climb to His feet !
 Yet with all this abounding experience,
 this Deity known,
 I shall dare to discover some province,
 some gift of my own.
 There's a faculty pleasant to exercise,
 hard to hoodwink,
 I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I
 laugh as I think)
 Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it,
 wot ye, I worst
 E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold !
 I could love if I durst !
 But I sink the pretension as fearing
 a man may o'ertake
 God's own speed in the one way of love :
 I abstain for love's sake.
 —What, my soul ? see thus far and no
 farther ? when doors great and
 small,
 Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch,
 should the hundredth appal ?
 In the least things, have faith, yet dis-
 trust in the greatest of all ?
 Do I find love so full in my nature,
 God's ultimate gift,

That I doubt His own love can compete
 with it ? here, the parts shift ?
 Here, the creature surpass the Creator,
 the end, what Began ?—
 Would I fain in my impotent yearning
 do all for this man,
 And dare doubt He alone shall not help
 him, who yet alone can ?
 Would it ever have entered my mind,
 the bare will, much less power,
 To bestow on this Saul what I sang of,
 the marvellous dower
 Of the life he was gifted and filled
 with ? to make such a soul,
 Such a body, and then such an earth
 for insphering the whole ?
 And doth it not enter my mind (as my
 warm tears attest)
 These good things being given, to go
 on, and give one more, the best ?
 Ay, to save and redeem and restore
 him, maintain at the height
 This perfection,—succeed with life's
 dayspring, death's minute of night ?
 Interpose at the difficult minute,
 snatch Saul, the mistake,
 Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,
 —and bid him awake
 From the dream, the probation, the
 prelude, to find himself set
 Clear and safe in new light and new
 life,—a new harmony yet
 To be run, and continued, and ended—
 who knows ?—or endure !
 The man taught enough by life's
 dream, of the rest to make sure ;
 By the pain-throb, triumphantly win-
 ning intensified bliss,
 And the next world's reward and
 repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

'I believe it ! 'tis Thou, God, that
 givest, 'tis I who receive :
 In the first is the last, in Thy will is my
 power to believe.
 All's one gift : Thou canst grant it
 moreover, as prompt to my prayer
 As I breathe out this breath, as I open
 these arms to the air.
 From Thy will, stream the worlds, life
 and nature, thy dread Sabaoth :
 I will ?—the mere atoms despise me !
 why am I not loth

To look that, even that in the face too ?
 why is it I dare
 Think but lightly of such impuissance ?
 what stops my despair ?
 This ;—'tis not what man Does which
 ✓ exalts him, but what man Would
 do !
 See the King—I would help him but
 cannot, the wishes fall through.
 Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow,
 grow poor to enrich,
 To fill up his life, starve my own out,
 'I would—knowing which,
 I know that my service is perfect. Oh,
 speak through me now !
 Would I suffer for him that I love ?
 So wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou !
 So shall crown Thee the topmost,
 ineffablest, uttermost crown—
 And Thy love fill infinitude wholly,
 nor leave up nor down
 One spot for the creature to stand in !
 It is by no breath,
 Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salva-
 tion joins issue with death !
 As Thy Love is discovered almighty,
 almighty be proved
 Thy power, that exists with and for it,
 of being Beloved !
 He who did most, shall bear most ; the
 ✓ strongest shall stand the most
 weak.
 'Tis the weakness in strength, that
 I cry for ! my flesh, that I
 seek
 In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it.
 O Saul, it shall be
 A Face like my face that receives thee ;
 a Man like to me,
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, for
 ever : a Hand like this hand
 Shall throw open the gates of new life
 to thee ! See the Christ stand !'

XIX

I know not too well how I found my
 way home in the night.
 There were witnesses, cohorts about
 me, to left and to right,
 Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen,
 the alive, the aware—
 I repressed, I got through them as
 hardly, as strugglingly there,

As a runner beset by the populace
famished for news—

Life or death. The whole earth was
awakened, hell loosed with her
crews ;

And the stars of night beat with emo-
tion, and tingled and shot

Out in fire the strong pain of pent
knowledge : but I fainted not,

For the Hand still impelled me at once
and supported, suppressed

All the tumult, and quenched it with
quiet, and holy behest,

Till the rapture was shut in itself, and
the earth sank to rest.

Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had
withered from earth—

Not so much, but I saw it die out in
the day's tender birth ;

In the gathered intensity brought to
the grey of the hills ;

In the shuddering forests' new awe ;
in the sudden wind-thrills ;

In the startled wild beasts that bore
off, each with eye sidling still

Though averted with wonder and
dread ; in the birds stiff and chill

That rose heavily, as I approached
them, made stupid with awe !

E'en the serpent that slid away silent,
— he felt the new Law.

The same stared in the white humid
faces upturned by the flowers ;

The same worked in the heart of
the cedar, and moved the vine-
browsers :

And the little brooks witnessing mur-
mured, persistent and low,

With their obstinate, all but hushed
voices—'E'en so, it is so !'

— MY STAR

ALL that I know

Of a certain star,

Is, it can throw

(Like the angled spar)

Now a dart of red,

Now a dart of blue,

Till my friends have said

They would fain see, too,

My star that dartles the red and the
blue !

Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower,
hangs furled :

They must solace themselves with
the Saturn above it.

What matter to me if their star is a
world ?

Mine has opened its soul to me ;
therefore I love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

I

How well I know what I mean to do

When the long dark Autumn even-
ings come,

And where, my soul, is thy pleasant
hue ?

With the music of all thy voices,
dumb

In life's November too !

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,

O'er a great wise book as besemeth
age,

While the shutters flap as the cross-
wind blows,

And I turn the page, and I turn the
page,

Not verse now, only prose !

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on
lip,

'There he is at it, deep in Greek :

Now, then, or never, out we slip

To cut from the hazels by the creek

A mainmast for our ship !'

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends !

Greek puts already on either side

Such a branch-work forth as soon
extends

To a vista opening far and wide,

And I pass out where it ends.

V

The outside-frame, like your hazel-
trees—

But the inside-archway narrows fast,

And a rarer sort succeeds to these,

And we slope to Italy at last

And youth, by green degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand :
 Oh, woman-country, wooed not wed,
 Loved all the more by earth's male-
 lands,
 Laid to their hearts instead !

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
 Half-way up in the Alpine gorge.
 Is that a tower, I point you plain,
 Or is it a mill, or an iron forge
 Breaks solitude in vain ?

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of
 things ;
 The woods are round us, heaped and
 dim ;
 From slab to slab how it slips and
 springs—
 The thread of water single and slim,
 Through the ravage some torrent
 brings !

IX

Does it feed the little lake below ?
 That speck of white just on its
 marge
 Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
 How sharp the silver spear-heads
 charge
 When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

X

On our other side is the straight-up
 rock ;
 And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge
 and it
 By boulder-stones where lichens mock
 The marks on a moth, and small ferns
 fit
 Their teeth to the polished block.

XI

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain-
 flowers,
 And the thorny balls, each three in
 one,
 The chestnuts throw on our path in
 showers !
 —For the drop of the woodland fruit's
 begun,
 These early November hours,

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
 Like a splash of blood, intense,
 abrupt,
 O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
 And lay it for show on the fairy-
 cupped
 Elf-needed mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, un-
 divulged
 Last evening—nay, in to-day's first
 dew
 Yon sudden coral nipple bulged
 Where a freaked, fawn-coloured,
 flaky crew
 Of toad-stools peep indulged.

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
 That takes the turn to a range
 beyond,
 Is the chapel reached by the one-arched
 bridge
 Where the water is stopped in a
 stagnant pond
 Danced over by the midge.

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-grey and mostly wet ;
 Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow
 dyke.
 See here again, how the lichens fret
 And the roots of the ivy strike !

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest
 comes
 On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
 To the dozen folk from their scattered
 homes,
 Gathered within that precinct small
 By the dozen ways one roams—

XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers'
 low shed,
 Leave the grange where the woodman
 stores his nuts,
 Or the wattled cote where the fowlers
 spread
 Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
 With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
 Set over the porch, Art's early wont :
 'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
 But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder,
 though,
 For a pent-house properly projects
 Where three carved beams make a
 certain show,
 Dating—good thought of our archi-
 tect's—
 'Five, six, 'nine, he lets you know.

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
 And a stray sheep drinks at the pond
 at times ;
 The place is silent and aware ;
 It has had its scenes, its joys and
 crimes,
 But that is its own affair.

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
 Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,
 Whom else could I dare look backward
 for,
 With whom beside should I dare
 pursue
 The path grey heads abhor ?

XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with
 them ;
 Youth, flowery all the way, there
 stops—
 Not they ; age threatens and they
 condemn,
 Till they reach the gulf wherein youth
 drops,
 One inch from our life's safe hem !

XXIII

With me, youth led . . . I will speak
 now,
 No longer watch you as you sit
 Reading by fire-light, that great brow
 And the spirit-small hand propping it,
 Mutely, my heart knows how—

XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,
 You are wont to answer, prompt as
 rhyme ;
 And you, too, find without a rebuff
 The response your soul seeks many
 a time
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV

My own, confirm me ! If I tread
 This path back, is it not in pride
 To think how little I dreamed it led
 To an age so blest that by its side
 Youth seems the waste instead ?

XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct !
 At first, 'twas something our two
 souls
 Should mix as mists do ; each is
 sucked
 Into each now : on, the new stream
 rolls,
 Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
 The great Word which makes all
 things new—
 When earth breaks up and Heaven
 expands—
 How will the change strike me and you
 In the House not made with hands ?

XXVIII

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
 Your heart anticipate my heart,
 You must be just before, in fine,
 See and make me see, for your part,
 New depths of the Divine !

XXIX

But who could have expected this,
 When we two drew together first
 Just for the obvious human bliss,
 To satisfy life's daily thirst
 With a thing men seldom miss ?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
 Let us lean and love it over again—
 Let us now forget and now recall,
 Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
 And gather what we let fall !

XXXI

What did I say?—that a small bird
sings

All day long, save when a brown
pair

Of hawks from the wood float with
wide wings

Strained to a bell; 'gainst the noon-
day glare

You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve

'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe

It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII

Hither we walked, then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,

And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really
speak,

Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel
sweet,

And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under—
Look through the window's grated
square:

Nothing to see! for fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date,
Then cross the bridge we crossed
before,

Take the path again—but wait!

XXXVII

Oh moment, one and infinite!

The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:

How grey at once is the evening
grown—

One star, the chrysolite!

XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we
heard,

The lights and the shades made up
a spell

Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds
away!

How a sound shall quicken content to
bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best
play,

And life be a proof of this!

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the
screen

So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and
her:

I could fix her face with a guard
between,
And find her soul as when friends
confer,

Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the wood-
land-time,

Wanting to sleep now over its best,
Shake the whole tree in the summer-
prime,

But bring to the last leaf no such
test:

'Hold the last fast!' runs the rhyme.

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year
can mend!

But a last leaf—fear to touch!

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—(best chance of
all)

Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-
place

You trembled to forestal!

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
—That hair so dark and dear, how
worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a very hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV

Oh, you might have turned and tried
a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear
And prove which suited more your
plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart
you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word
If you join two lives, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy
third;
One near one is too far.

XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us
fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken
between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they
stood;
We caught for a second the powers
at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and
for good,
Their work was done—we might go
or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit—the thing it does!

L

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,
It forwards the General Deed of Man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

LI

I am named and known by that hour's
feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you. Sweet!

LII

And to watch you sink by the fire-side
now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII

So, the earth has gained by one man
more,
And the gain of earth must be
Heaven's gain too,
And the whole is well worth thinking
o'er
When the autumn comes: which I
mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

I

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou
Who art all truth and who dost love
me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice
breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly and couldst love
me still
A whole long life through, had but love
its will,
Would death that leads me from thee
brook delay!

II

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Would never let mine go, nor heart
withstand

The beating of my heart to reach its place.
 When should I look for thee and feel thee gone?
 When cry for the old comfort and find none?
 Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so!
 might I save,
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
 It is not to be granted. But the soul
 Whence the love comes, all ravage
 leaves that whole;
 Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes
 all things new.

IV

And 'twould not be because my eye
 grew dim
 Thou couldst not find the love there,
 thanks to Him
 Who never is dishonoured in the
 spark
 He gave us from His fire of fires, and
 bade
 Remember whence it sprang nor be
 afraid
 While that burns on, though all the
 rest grow dark.

V

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white
 and clean
 Outside as inside, soul and soul's
 demesne
 Alike, this body given to show it by!
 Oh, three-parts through the worst of
 life's abyss,
 What plaudits from the next world
 after this,
 Couldst thou repeat a stroke and
 gain the sky!

VI

And is it not the bitterer to think
 That, disengage our hands and thou
 wilt sink

Although thy love was love in very
 deed?
 I know that nature! Pass a festive
 day
 Thou dost not throw its relic-flower
 away
 Nor bid its music's loitering echo
 speed.

VII

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie
 where it fell;
 If old things remain old things all is
 well,
 For thou art grateful as becomes
 man's best:
 And hadst thou only heard me play
 one tune,
 Or viewed me from a window, not so
 soon
 With thee would such things fade as
 with the rest.

VIII

I seem to see! we meet and part;
 'tis brief;
 The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
 The very chair I sat on, breaks the
 rank;
 That is a portrait of me on the wall—
 Three lines, my face comes at so slight
 a call:
 And for all this, one little hour's to
 thank.

IX

But now, because the hour through
 years was fixed,
 Because our inmost beings met and
 mixed,
 Because thou once hast loved me—
 wilt thou dare
 Say to thy soul and Who may list
 beside,
 'Therefore she is immortally my bride,
 Chance cannot change my love, nor
 time impair.

X

'So, what if in the dusk of life that's
 left,
 I, a tired traveller, of my sun bereft,

Look from my path when, mimicking
the same,
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come
and gone ?
—Where was it till the sunset ? where
anon
It will be at the sunrise ! what's to
blame ?

XI

Is it so helpful to thee ? canst thou
take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's
sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam ?
Is the remainder of the way so long
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the
strong ?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones
doze and dream !

XII

'—Ah, but the fresher faces ! Is it
true,
Thou'lt ask, 'some eyes are beautiful
and new ?
Some hair,—how can one choose but
grasp such wealth ?
And if a man would press his lips to
lips
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose cup
there slips
The dew-drop out of, must it be by
stealth ?

XIII

'It cannot change the love still kept
for Her,
Much more than, such a picture to
prefer
Passing a day with, to a room's bare
side :
The painted form takes nothing she
possessed,
Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at
rest,
A man looks. Once more, what is
there to chide ?

XIV

So must I see, from where I sit and
watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand
attach

Its warrant to the very thefts from
me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me
proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid
God see !

XV

Love so, then, if thou wilt ! Give all
thou canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no
more,
Re-issue looks and words from the old
mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the
print
Image and superscription once they
bore !

XVI

Re-coin thyself and give it them to
spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the
end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art and
mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the
sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must
come
Back to the heart's place here I keep
for thee !

XVII

Only, why should it be with stain at
all ?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of
coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow ?
Why need the other women know so
much,
And talk together, 'Such the look and
such
The smile he used to love with, then
as now !'

XVIII

Might I die last and show thee ! Should
I find
Such hardship in the few years left
behind,

If free to take and light my lamp,
and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and
sit
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank,
I know !

XIX

Why, time was what I wanted, to
turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more
and more
By heart each word, too much to
learn at first ;
And join thee all the fitter for the
pause
'Neath the low door-way's lintel. That
were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst,
if I durst !

XX

And yet thou art the nobler of us two :
What dare I dream of, that thou canst
not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with
one stride ?
I'll say then, here 's a trial and a task—
Is it to bear ?—if easy, I'll not ask :
Though love fail, I can trust on in
thy pride.

XXI

Pride ?—when those eyes forestal the
life behind
The death I have to go through !—
when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all
of thee !
What did I fear ? Thy love shall hold
me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will
not be !

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May ?

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III

Help me to hold it ! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's
cloft,
Some old tomb's ruin ; yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they
groped
Among the honey-meal : and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast !

V

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere !
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI

Such life there, through such lengths
of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting Nature have her way
While Heaven looks from its towers !

VII

How say you ? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above !
How is it under our control
To love or not to love ?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor
free !
Where does the fault lie ? what the
core
Of the wound, since wound must be ?

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
 See with your eyes, and set my heart
 Beating by yours, and drink my fill
 At your soul's springs,—your part,
 my part
 In life, for good and ill.

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
 Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
 Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the
 rose
 And love it more than tongue can
 speak—
 Then the good minute goes.

XI

Already how am I so far
 Out of that minute? Must I go
 Still like the thistle ball, no bar,
 Onward, whenever light winds blow,
 Fixed by no friendly star?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!
 Where is the thread now? Off
 again!
 The old trick! Only I discern—
 Infinite passion, and the pain
 Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS

I

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
 Making it blossom with pleasure,
 Ere the high tree-top she sprang to,
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying
 feet hung to,—
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung
 to!

II

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
 Thrilled in a minute erratic,
 Ere the true bosom she bent on,
 Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
 Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
 Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer
 went on—
 Love to be saved for it, proffered to,
 spent on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

I

THAT WAS I, you heard last night
 When there rose no moon at all,
 Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
 Tent of heaven, a planet small:
 Life was dead, and so was light.

II

Not a twinkle from the fly,
 Not a glimmer from the worm.
 When the crickets stopped their cry,
 When the owls forbore a term,
 You heard music; that was I.

III

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
 Sultrily suspired for proof:
 In at heaven and out again,
 Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
 Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV

What they could my words expressed,
 O my Love, my All, my One!
 Singing helped the verses best,
 And when singing's best was done,
 To my lute I left the rest.

V

So wore night; the East was gray.
 White the broad-faced hemlock-
 flowers;
 There would be another day;
 Ere its first of heavy hours
 Found me, I had past away.

VI

What became of all the hopes,
 Words and song and lute as well?
 Say, this struck you—'When life
 gropes
 Feebly for the path where fell
 Light last on the evening slopes,

VII

'One friend in that path shall be
 To secure my steps from wrong;
 One to count night day for me,
 Patient through the watches long,
 Serving most with none to see.'

VIII

Never say—as something bodes—
 'So, the worst has yet a worse!
 When life halts 'neath double loads,
 Better the task-master's curse
 Than such music on the roads!

IX

'When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning
went,
Show the final storm begun—

X

'When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot,—
Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where these are not ?

XI

'Has some plague a longer lease
Proffering its help uncouth ?
Can't one even die in peace ?
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees ?'

XII

Oh, how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate !
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass !

ONE WAY OF LOVE

I

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may
pass.

She will not turn aside ? Alas !
Let them lie. Suppose they die ?
The chance was they might take her
eye.

II

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute !
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music ? So !
Break the string ; fold music's wing :
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing !

III

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion.—Heaven or
Hell ?

She will not give me Heaven ? 'Tis well !
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win Heaven, blest are they !

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

I

JUNE was not over,
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true
air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't
were,—
'If I tire of your June, will she greatly
care ?'

II

Well, Dear, in-doors with you !
True, serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom ?
Can it clear scores with you ?
Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper !
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly
If June mends her bowers now, your
hand left unsightly
By plucking their roses,—my June will
do rightly,

III

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness :
Or if, with experience of man and of
spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong
insect-ridder,
And stop the fresh spinning,—why,
June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN

I

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye,
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

II

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you,
Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know—
For a word's sake,
Or a sword's sake,
All's the same, whate'er the chance,
you know.

IV

And in turn we make you ours, we
say—
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we
say.

V

All's our own, to make the most of,
Sweet—
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI

But for loving, why, you would not,
Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet!

VII

So, we leave the sweet face fondly
there:
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX

As,—why must one, for the love for-
gone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,—the Heaven, we looked above
for, gone!

X

Why with beauty, needs there money
be—
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'T would undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples
sweet?

XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection—
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at
once?

XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
—A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the
rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower.
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII

Then, how grace a rose? I know a
way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw
away!

RESPECTABILITY

I

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim 'I know you
both,

Have recognized your plighted troth,
Am sponsor for you: live in peace!—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so
fast,

Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

II

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the
Seine,

And feel the Boulevard break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

III

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my finger to caress
Your lip's contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word!—the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? down the court three lampions
flare—

Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE

I

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou
shalt find her,
Next time, herself!—not the trouble
behind her

Left in the curtain, the couch's per-
fume!

As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath
blossomed anew:

Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave
of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to
the centre.

Still the same chance! she goes out as
I enter.

Spend my whole day in the que-r,—
who cares?

But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such
suites to explore,

Such closets to search, such alcoves to
importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE

ESCAPE me?

Never—

Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us
both,

Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other
pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear:
It seems too much like a fate, indeed
Though I do my best I shall scarce
succeed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life, that's
all.

While, look but once from your farthest
bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope drops to ground
Than a new one, straight to the self-
same mark,

I shape me—

Ever

Removed!

IN THREE DAYS

I

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are
short,

Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn!

Feel, where my life broke off from
thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and
fine,—
Only a touch and we combine !

II

Too long, this time of year, the days !
But nights—at least the nights are
short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth,
And my eyes hold her ! what is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

III

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled !
As early Art embrowned the gold.

IV

What great fear, should one say,
'Three days
That change the world, might change
as well
Your fortune ; and if joy delays,
Be happy that no worse befell.'
What small fear, if another says,
'Three days and one short night beside
May throw no shadow on your ways ;
But years must teem with change un-
tried,
With chance not easily defied,
With an end somewhere undescried.'
No fear !—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear ? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are
short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR

I

NEVER any more
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.

Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive—
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him ? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head ?
Strange ! that very way
Love begun :
I as little understand
Love's decay.

III

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too,
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprung,
Then he heard.

IV

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed the air I breathed,
Satisfied !
I, too, at love's brim
'Touched the sweet :
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V

'Speak, I love thee best !'
He exclaimed.
'Let thy love my own foretell,'
I confessed :
'Clasp my heart on thine
Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
Hath mine !'

VI

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth ?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone ?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth—
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

VII

That was all I meant,
 —To be just,
 And the passion I had raised,
 To content.
 Since he chose to change
 Gold for dust,
 If I gave him what he praised
 Was it strange ?

VIII

Would he loved me yet,
 On and on.
 While I found some way undreamed
 —Paid my debt !
 Gave more life and more,
 Till, all gone,
 He should smile 'She never seemed
 Mine before.

IX

'What—she felt the while,
 Must I think ?
 Love 's so different with us men,'
 He should smile.
 'Dying for my sake—
 White and pink !
 Can't we touch these bubbles then
 But they break ?'

X

Dear, the pang is brief,
 Do thy part,
 Have thy pleasure. How perplex
 Grows belief !
 Well, this cold clay clod
 Was man's heart.
 Crumble it—and what comes next ?
 Is it God ?

WOMEN AND ROSES

I

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
 And which of its roses thrice
 Is the dearest rose to me ?

II

Round and round, like a dance of
 snow
 In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
 Floating the women faded for ages,
 Sculptured in stone, on the poet's
 pages.

Then follow women fresh and gay,
 Living and loving and loved to-day,
 Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of
 maidens,
 Beauties unborn. And all, to one
 cadence,
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
 Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :
 Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
 You, great shapes of the antique time !
 How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
 Break my heart at your feet to please
 you ?
 Oh, to possess, and be possessed !
 Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid
 breast !
 But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
 Drink once and die !—In vain, the
 same fashion,
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V

Dear rose, thy joy 's undimmed ;
 Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
 Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth
 The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
 So will I bury me while burning,
 Quench like him at a plunge my yearn-
 ing,
 Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !
 Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
 Prison all my soul in eternities of
 pleasure !
 Girdle me once ! But no—in their old
 measure
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII

Dear rose without a thorn,
 Thy bud 's the babe unborn :
 First streak of a new morn.

VIII

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the
 clear !
 What 's far conquers what is near.

Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our own
flesh moulders

What shall arrive with the cycle's
change ?

A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that
began her,

Shaped her to his mind !—Alas ! in like
manner

They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE

I

LET them fight it out, friend ! things
have gone too far.

God must judge the couple ! leave
them as they are

—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his
glory,

And whichever one the guilt's with to
my story.

II

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in
such a slough,

Strike no arm out further, stick and
stink as now,

Leaving right and wrong to settle the
embroilment,

Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and
entailment ?

III

Who's the culprit of them ? How
must he conceive

God—the queen he caps to, laughing
in his sleeve,

‘Tis but decent to profess oneself
beneath her :

Still, one must not be too much in
earnest, either !

IV

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God
observes,

Than go live his life out ! life will try
his nerves,

When the sky which noticed all, makes
no disclosure,

And the earth keeps up her terrible
composure.

V

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls
of rose,

Pluck their fruits when grape-trees
graze him as he goes.

For he gins to guess the purpose of the
garden,

With the sly mute thing beside, there,
for a warden.

VI

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant
at his side,

A leer and lie in every eye of its obse-
quious hide ?

When will come an end to all the mock
obseisance,

And the price appear that pays for the
misfeasance ?

VII

So much for the culprit. Who's the
martyred man ?

Let him bear one stroke more, for be
sure he can !

He that strove thus evil's lump with
good to leaven,

Let him give his blood at last and get
his Heaven !

VIII

All or nothing, stake it ! trusts he God
or no ?

Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be
it so !

Now, enough of your chicane of prudent
pauses,

Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-
clauses !

IX

Ah, ‘forgive’ you bid him ? While
God's champion lives,

Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why, he
forgives.

But you must not end my friend ere you
begin him ;

Evil stands not crowned on earth, while
breath is in him !

X

Once more—Will the wronger, at this
last of all,

Dare to say, ‘I did wrong,’ rising in his
fall ?

No ?—Let go, then ! both the fighters
to their places !
While I count three, step you back as
many paces !

AFTER

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at
first
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man !
Death has done all death can.

And, absorbed in the new life he
leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both
strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace ?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold :
His outrage, God's patience, man's
scorn
Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place :
Cover the face.

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO

I

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou
only leave
That child, when thou hast done
with him, for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when
eve
Shall find performed thy special
ministry
And time come for departure, thou,
suspending
Thy flight, may'st see another child for
tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no
more,
From where thou standest now, to
where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the
child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel
thee guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, dis-
carding
Yon Heaven thy home, that waits
and opes its door !

III

I would not look up thither past thy
head
Because the door opes, like that
child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face
instead,
Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou
bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands
together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently
tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy
garment's spread ?

IV

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy
healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy
breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much
thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and
smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had
soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

V

How soon all worldly wrong would be
repaired !
I think how I should view the earth
and skies
And sea, when once again my brow
was bared
After thy healing, with such different
eyes.

O, world, as God has made it! all is
beauty:

And knowing this, is love, and love is
duty.

What further may be sought for or
declared?

VI

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!)—that little
child to pray,

Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head
turned away

Over the earth where so much lay before
him

Of work to do, though Heaven was
opening o'er him,

And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII

We were at Fano, and three times we
went

To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's
content

—My angel with me too: and since
I care

For dear Guercino's fame (to which in
power

And glory comes this picture for a
dower,

Fraught with a pathos so magnificent).

VIII

And since he did not work so earnestly
At all times, and has else endured
some wrong—

I took one thought his picture struck
from me,

And spread it out, translating it to
song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear
old friend?

How rolls the Wairoa at your world's
far end?

This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA

I

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?

How strange it seems, and new!

II

But you were living before that,
And you are living after,
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter!

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its
own

And a use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather—
Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY

I

STAND still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try and draw
you.

Some night you'll fail us: when afar
You rise, remember one man saw
you,

Knew you, and named a star!

II

My star, God's glow-worm! Why
extend

That loving hand of His which leads
you,

Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless He needs
you—

Just saves your light to spend?

III

His clenched Hand shall unclose at
last,

I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the Future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their Present for this Past.

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's
brow

Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
'Others give best at first, but Thou
Forever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now!'

V

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder:

I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the Old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII

And each bystander of them all
Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
—To get which, pricked a king's
ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live welks, each lip's beard dripping
fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the
throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's
womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till cunning comes to pound and
squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there's the extract, flaked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes
combine
To paint the Future from the Past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle
eats:
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns
his cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats.—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex
up?
What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SANE- GOTHA

I

HIST, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I've put you so
oft—
What do you mean by your moun-
tainous fugues?
See, we're alone in the loft,—

II

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note—
Dead, though, and done with, this
many a year:
Let's have a colloquy, something to
quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III

See, the church empties apace:
Fast they extinguish the lights—
Hallo there, sacristan! five minutes'
grace!
Here's a crank pedal wants setting
to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV

See, our huge house of the sounds,
Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!
—Oh, you may challenge them, not
a response
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

V

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt ?

—March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept
about,

Supervise all betwixt pavement and
spire,

Put rats and mice to the rout—

VI

Aloys and Jurien and Just—

Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks
rust,

Rub the church-plate, darn the
sacrament-lace,

Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII

Here's your book, younger folks
shelve !

Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard
number twelve ?

Here's what should strike,—could
one handle it cunningly :

Help the axe, give it a helve !

VIII

Page after page as I played,

Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and
surveyed,

O'er my three claviers, yon forest of
pipes

Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX

Sure you were wishful to speak,

You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,

Like two great breves as they wrote
them of yore

Each side that bar, your straight beak !

X

Sure you said—'Good, the mere notes !

Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Know what procured me our Company's
votes—

Masters being lauded and sciolists
shent,

Parted the sheep from the goats !'

XI

Well then, speak up, never flinch !

Quick, ere my candle's a snuff

—Burnt, do you see ? to its uttermost
inch—

I believe in you, but that's not
enough :

Give my conviction a clinch !

XII

First you deliver your phrase

—Nothing propound, that I see,

Fit in itself for much blame or much
praise—

Answered no less, where no answer
needs be :

Off start the Two on their ways !

XIII

Straight must a Third interpose,

Volunteer needlessly help—

In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in
his nose,

So the cry's open, the kennel's
a-yelp,

Argument's hot to the close !

XIV

One dissertates, he is candid ;

Two must discept,—has distin-
guished ;

Three helps the couple, if ever yet man
did ;

Four protests ; Five makes a dart at
the thing wished :

Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV

One says his say with a difference—

More of expounding, explaining !

All now is wrangle, abuse and vocifer-
ance—

Now there's a truce, all's subdued,
self-restraining—

Five, though, stands out all the stiffer
hence.

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive ;

Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant ;

Three makes rejoinder, expansive, ex-
plosive ;

Four overbears them all, strident and
strepitant :

Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve !

XVII

Now, they ply axes and crowbars ;
 Now, they prick pins at a tissue
 Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To
 what issue ?
 Where is our gain at the Two-bars ?

XVIII

Est fuga, volvitur rota !
 On we drift. Where looms the dim
 port ?
 One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute
 their quota—
 Something is gained, if one caught
 but the import—
 Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha !

XIX

What with affirming, denying,
 Holding, risposting, subjoining,
 All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance
 I'm trying . . .
 There ! See our roof, its gilt mould-
 ing and groining
 Under those spider-webs lying !

XX

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
 Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
 Till one exclaims—'But where's music,
 the dickens ?
 Blot ye the gold, while your spider-
 web strengthens
 —Blacked to the stoutest of tickens ?'

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous :
 Provo me such censure's unfounded !
 Seems it surprising a lover grows
 . jealous—
 Hopes 'twas for something his organ-
 pipes sounded,
 Tiring three boys at the bellows ?

XXII

Is it your moral of Life ?
 Such a web, simple and subtle,
 Weave we on earth here in impotent
 strife,
 Backward and forward each throw-
 ing his shuttle,
 Death ending all with a knife ?

XXIII

Over our heads Truth and Nature—
 Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
 Ins and outs, weaving a new legis-
 lature—
 God's gold just shining its last where
 that lodges,
 Palled beneath Man's usurpature !

XXIV

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
 Cherub and trophy and garland.
 Nothings grow something which quietly
 closes
 Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse
 of the far land
 Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV

Ah, but traditions, inventions,
 (Say we and make up a visage)
 So many men with such various inten-
 tions
 Down the past ages must know more
 than this age !
 Leave the web all its dimensions !

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
 Proved a mere mountain in labour ?
 Better submit—try again—what's the
 claf ?
 'Faith, it's no trifle for pipe and for
 tabor—
 Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger :
 Learning it once, who would lose it ?
 Yet all the while a misgiving will
 linger,
 Truth's golden o'er us although we
 refuse it—
 Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her !

XXVIII

Hugues ! I advise *meā poenā*
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear
 the arena !
 Say the word, straight I unstop the
 Full-Organ,
 Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear
 Great brow; tho' when his brother's
 black
 Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond
 here?
 And have you brought my tercel
 back?
 I just was telling Adela
 How many birds it struck since May.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
 'Praise God,' sang Theocrite.
 Then to his poor trade he turned,
 By which the daily meal was earned.
 Hard he laboured, long and well;
 O'er his work the boy's curls fell:
 But ever, at each period,
 He stopped and sang, 'Praise God.'
 Then back again his curls he threw.
 And cheerful turned to work anew.
 Said Blaise, the listening monk, 'Well
 done;
 I doubt not thou art heard, my son:
 As well as if thy voice to-day
 Were praising God, the Pope's great
 way.
 This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
 Praises God from Peter's dome.'
 Said Theocrite, 'Would God that I
 Might praise Him, that great way, and
 die!'
 Night passed, day shone,
 And Theocrite was gone.
 With God a day endures alway,
 A thousand years are but a day.
 God said in Heaven, 'Nor day nor night
 Now brings the voice of my delight.'
 Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
 Spread his wings and sank to earth;
 Entered in flesh, the empty cell,
 Lived there, and played the craftsman
 well;
 And morning, evening, noon and night,
 Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
 The man put off the stripling's hue:
 The man matured and fell away
 Into the season of decay:
 And ever o'er the trade he bent,
 And ever lived on earth content.
 (He did God's will; to him, all one
 If on the earth or in the sun.)
 God said, 'A praise is in mine ear;
 There is no doubt in it, no fear:
 So sing old worlds, and so
 New worlds that from my footstool go.
 Clearer loves sound other ways:
 I miss my little human praise.'
 Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off
 fell
 The flesh disguise, remained the cell.
 'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
 And paused above Saint Peter's dome.
 In the tiring-room close by
 The great outer gallery,
 With his holy vestments dight,
 Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:
 And all his past career
 Came back upon him clear,
 Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
 Till on his life the sickness weighed;
 And in his cell, when death drew near,
 An angel in a dream brought cheer:
 And rising from the sickness drear
 He grew a priest, and now stood here.
 To the East with praise he turned,
 And on his sight the angel burned.
 'I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
 And set thee here; I did not well.
 Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
 Vain was thy dream of many a year.
 Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it
 dropped—
 Creation's chorus stopped!
 Go back and praise again
 The early way, while I remain.
 With that weak voice of our disdain,
 Take up Creation's pausing strain.

Back to the cell and poor employ :
 Become the craftsman and the boy !'
 Theocrite grew old at home ;
 A new Pope dwelt in Peter's Dome.
 One vanished as the other died :
 They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

I

Of the million or two, more or less,
 I rule and possess,
 One man, for some cause undefined,
 Was least to my mind.

II

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
 For, what was his force ?
 I pinned him to earth with my weight
 And persistence of hate :
 And he lay, would not moan, would not
 curse,
 As his lot might be worse.

III

'Were the object less mean, would he
 stand
 At the swing of my hand !
 For obscurity helps him and blots
 The hole where he squats.'
 So I set my five wits on the stretch
 To inveigle the wretch.
 All in vain ! gold and jewels I threw,
 Still he couched there perdue.
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,
 Hid in roses my mesh,
 Choicest cates and the flagon's best
 spilth :
 Still he kept to his filth !

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
 To his heart, did I press—
 Just a son or a mother to seize !
 No such booty as these !
 Were it simply a friend to pursue
 'Mid my million or two,
 Who could pay me in person or pelf
 What he owes me himself.
 No ! I could not but smile through my
 chafe :
 For the fellow lay safe
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
 —Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humour more great took its
 place
 At the thought of his face,
 The droop, the low cares of the month,
 The trouble uncouth
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is
 fain
 To put out of its pain—
 And, 'no !' I admonished myself,
 'Is one mocked by an elf,
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat ?
 The gravamen's in that !
 How the lion, who crouches to suit
 His back to my foot,
 Would admire that I stand in debate !
 But the Small turns the Great
 If it vexes you,—that is the thing !
 'Toad or rat vex the King ?
 'Though I waste half my realm to
 unearth
 Toad or rat, 'tis well worth !'

VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan
 To extinguish the man.
 Round his creep-hole, with never a
 break
 Ran my fires for his sake ;
 Over-head, did my thunder combine
 With my under-ground mine :
 Till I looked from my labor content
 To enjoy the event.

VII

When sudden . . . how think ye, the
 end ?
 Did I say 'without friend ?'
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge
 The whole sky grew his targe
 With the sun's self for visible boss,
 While an Arm ran across
 Which the earth heaved beneath like
 a breast
 Where the wretch was safe prest !
 Do you see ? just my vengeance com-
 plete,
 The man sprang to his feet,
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts,
 and prayed !
 —So, I was afraid !

MESMERISM

I

ALL I believed is true !
 I am able yet
 All I want to get
 By a method as strange as new :
 Dare I trust the same to you ?

II

If at night, when doors are shut,
 And the wood-worm picks,
 And the death-watch ticks,
 And the bar has a flag of smut,
 And a cat's in the water-butt—

III

And the socket floats and flares,
 And the house-beams groan,
 And a foot unknown
 Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
 And the locks slip unawares—

IV

And the spider, to serve his ends,
 By a sudden thread,
 Arms and legs outspread,
 On the table's midst descends,
 Comes to find, God knows what
 friends !—

V

If since eve drew in, I say,
 I have sat and brought
 (So to speak) my thought
 To bear on the woman away,
 Till I felt my hair turn grey—

VI

Till I seemed to have and hold,
 In the vacancy
 'Twixt the wall and me,
 From the hair-plait's chestnut-gold
 To the foot in its muslin fold—

VII

Have and hold, then and there,
 Her, from head to foot,
 Breathing and mute,
 Passive and yet aware,
 In the grasp of my steady stare—

VIII

Hold and have, there and then,
 All her body and soul
 That completes my Whole,
 All that women add to men,
 In the clutch of my steady ken—

IX

Having and holding, till
 I imprint her fast
 On the void at last
 As the sun does whom he will
 By the calcypist's skill—

X

Then,—if my heart's strength serve,
 And through all and each
 Of the veils I reach
 To her soul and never swerve,
 Knitting an iron nerve—

XI

Commanding that to advance
 And inform the shape
 Which has made escape
 And before my countenance
 Answers me glance for glance—

XII

I, still with a gesture fit
 Of my hands that best
 Do my soul's behest,
 Pointing the power from it,
 While myself do steadfast sit—

XIII

Steadfast and still the same
 On my object bent,
 While the hands give vent
 To my ardour and my aim
 And break into very flame—

XIV

Then, I reach, I must believe,
 Not her soul in vain,
 For to me again
 It reaches, and past retrieve
 Is wound in the toils I weave—

XV

And must follow as I require,
 As befits a thrall,
 Bringing flesh and all,
 Essence and earth-attire,
 To the source of the tractile fire—

XVI

Till the house called hers, not mine,
 With a growing weight
 Seems to suffocate
 If she break not its leaden line
 And escape from its close confine—

XVII

Out of doors into the night !
 On to the maze
 Of the wild wood-ways,
 Not turning to left nor right
 From the pathway, blind with sight—

XVIII

Making thro' rain and wind
 O'er the broken shrubs,
 'Twixt the stems and stubs,
 With a still, composed, strong mind,
 Not a care for the world behind—

XIX

Swifter and still more swift,
 As the crowding peace
 Doth to joy increase
 In the wide blind eyes uplift,
 Thro' the darkness and the drift !

XX

While I—to the shape, I too
 Feel my soul dilate
 Not a whit abate
 And relax not a gesture due,
 As I see my belief come true.

XXI

For, there ! have I drawn or no
 Life to that lip ?
 Do my fingers dip
 In a flame which again they throw
 On the cheek that breaks a-glow ?

XXII

Ha ! was the hair so first ?
 What, unfilleted,
 Made alive, and spread
 Through the void with a rich outburst,
 Chestnut gold-interspersed ?

XXIII

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
 See, on either side,
 Her two arms divide
 Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
 Take me, for I am thine !

XXIV

'Now—now'—the door is heard !
 Hark, the stairs ! and near—
 Nearer—and here—
 'Now !' and at call the third
 She enters without a word.

XXV

On doth she march and on
 To the fancied shape ;
 It is, past escape,
 Herself, now : the dream is done
 And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI

First I will pray. Do Thou
 That ownest the soul,
 Yet wilt grant control
 To another, nor disallow
 For a time, restrain me now !

XXVII

I admonish me while I may,
 Not to squander guilt,
 Since require Thou wilt
 At my hand its price one day !
 What the price is, who can say ?

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*.)

'Heigho,' yawned one day King
 Francis,
 'Distance all value enhances !
 When a man's busy, why, leisure
 Strikes him as wonderful pleasure :
 'Faith, and at leisure once is he ?
 Straightway he wants to be busy.
 Here we've got peace ; and aghast I'm
 Caught thinking war the true pastime !
 Is there a reason in metre ?
 Give us your speech, master Peter !'
 I who, if mortal dare say so,
 Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
 'Sire,' I replied, 'joys prove cloudlets.
 Men are the merest fixions'—
 Here the King whistled aloud, 'Let's
 . . . Heigho . . . go look at our lions !'
 Such are the sorrowful chances
 If you talk fine to King Francis.
 And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
 Our company, Francis was leading,
 Increased by new followers tenfold
 Before he arrived at the penfold ;

Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.

And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the
foremost

With the dame he professed to adore
most—

Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared
follow,

And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion,
brooded.

The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once
stir

Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating re-
doubled;

A pause, while the pit's mouth was
troubled,

The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and
sputter;

Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion!
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement
Marot

(Whose experience of nature's but
narrow,

And whose faculties move in no small
mist

When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu!

One's whole blood grew curdling and
creepy

To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they
rested

On the space that might stand him in
best stead:

For who knew, he thought, what the
amazement,

The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,

And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered?

Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his fore-
head,

By the hope in those eyes wide and
steady,

He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.

'How he stands!' quoth the King:
'we may well swear,

(No novice, we've won our spurs else-
where,

And so can afford the confession,)
We exercise wholesome discretion
In keeping aloof from his threshold;
Once hold you, those jaws want no
fresh hold,

Their first would too pleasantly purloin
The visitor's brisket or surloin:

But who's he would prove so fool-
hardy?

Not the best man of Marignan, *parlie!*'

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:

The dame 'twas, who flung it and
jested

With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pur-
suing

His suit, weighing out with nonchal-
ance

Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's
a tarrier!

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove,—while
the lion

Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye
on

The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's
sapphire,

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,

And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

'Your heart's queen, you
dethrone her ?
So should I!'—cried the King—"twas
mere vanity,
Not love, set that task to humanity !'
Lords and ladies alike turned with
loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's
clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merri-
ment,—

As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,—
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what 'speeches like gold' were re-
ducible,

And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but
proper ;

To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laugh-
ter ;

Clement Marot stayed ; I followed
after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all
meant ?

If she wished not the rash deed's
recalment ?

'For I'—so I spoke—'am a Poet :
Human' nature,—behoves that I know
it !'

She told me, 'Too long had I heard
Of the deed proved ~~alone~~ by the word :
For my love—what De Lorge would
not dare !

With my scorn—what De Lorge could
compare !

And the endless descriptions of death
He would brave when my lip formed
a breath,

I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
Doubt his word—and moreover, per-
force,

For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
Must offer my love in return.

When I looked on your lion, it brought
All the dangers at once to my thought,
Encountered by all sorts of men,
Before he was lodged in his den,—
From the poor slave whose club or bare
hands

Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
With no King and no Court to applaud,
By no shame, should he shrink, over-
awed,

Yet to capture the creature made
shift,

That his rude boys might laugh at the
gift,

—To the page who last leaped o'er the
fence

Of the pit, on no greater pretence
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
Lest his pay for a week should be
stopped.

So, wiser I judged it to make
One trial what "death for my sake"
Really meant, while the power was yet
mine,

Than to wait until time should define
Such a phrase not so simply as I,
Who took it to mean just "to die."

The blow a glove gives is but weak :
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek ?
But when the heart suffers a blow,
Will the pain pass so soon, do you
know ?'

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway ;
No doubt that a noble should more
weigh

His life than befits a plebeian ;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to
serve her)

—He'd have scarce thought you did
him the worst turn

If you whispered 'Friend, what you'd
get, first earn !'

And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they
married,

To that marriage some happiness,
maugre

The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with
men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in
envy;
And in short stood so plain a head
taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do
you call her?
The Beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a
week well.
And 'twas noticed he never would
honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon
her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those
straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat
in,—
But of course this adventure came pat
in.
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such
glory,
But the wife smiled—'His nerves are
grown firmer:
Mine he brings now and utters no
murmur!'
Venienti occurrere morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES

I've a Friend, over the sea;
I like him, but he loves me.
It all grew out of the books I write:
They find such favour in his sight
That he slaughters you with savage
looks
Because you don't admire my books:
He does himself though,—and if some
vein
Were to snap to-night in this heavy
brain,
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
Round should I just turn quietly,
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my
hand
Till I found him, come from his foreign
land,

To be my nurse in this poor place,
And make my broth and wash my face
And light my fire, and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humoured
smile
That I told him 'Better have kept
away
Than come and kill me, night and day,
With, worse than fever's throbs and
shoots,
The creaking of his clumsy boots.'
I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking Two.
And I think I had rather . . . woe is
me!
—Yes, rather see him than not see,
If lifting a hand would seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen; this garret's freezing cold!
And I've a Lady—There he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of
snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn
Upthrust and outward-borne
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be!
Call my thoughts false and my fancies
quaint
And my style infirm and its figures
faint.
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get!
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that Lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the Devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends!
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best
crown,
And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in

With the face of her, the eyes of her,
The lips, the little chin, the stir
Of shadow round her mouth; and she
—I'll tell you,—calmly would decree
That I should roast at a slow fire,
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.
There may be Heaven; there must be
Hell;
Meantime, there is our Earth here—
well!

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

THAT second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds through the country-
side

Breathed hot and instant on my
trace,—

I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys *auvo*
plucked

The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping through the moss they
love.

—How long it seems since Charles was
lost!

Six days the soldiers crossed and
crossed

The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal-fires; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;

For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew; when these had
passed,

I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart
One instant, rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground:
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she
stripped

A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast:
Then I drew breath: they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts; on
me

Rested the hopes of Italy;
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 'twas told her, could not
fail

Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and
stood,

Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the
worm—

At first sight of her eyes, I said,
'I am that man upon whose head
They fix the price, because I hate
The Austrians over us: the State
Will give you gold—oh, gold so much,
If you betray me to their clutch
And be your death, for aught I know,
If once they find you saved their foe.
Now, you must bring me food and
drink,

And also paper, pen and ink,
And carry safe what I shall write
To Padua, which you'll reach at
night

Before the Duomo shuts; go in,
And wait till Tenebrae begin;

Walk to the Third Confessional,
Between the pillar and the wall,
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes
peace?*

Say it a second time, then cease;
And if the voice inside returns,
*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns
The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip
My letter where you placed your lip;
Then come back happy we have done
Our mother service—I, the son,
As you the daughter of our land!

Three mornings more, she took her
stand

In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming: we conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
'He could do much'—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
'She could not speak for others, who
Had other thoughts; herself she
knew.'

And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—'This faith was shown
To Italy, our mother; she
'Uses my hand and blesses thee!'
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—
aught

Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, nothing could con-
vince

My inmost heart I had a friend.
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be;
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil

In blood thro' these two hands: and
next,

—Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers: last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For
fast

Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise; while some opine
'Freedom grows License,' some suspect
'Haste breeds Delay,' and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen 'All's for best,'
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think, then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt; what
harm

If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now!

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

PIANO DI SORRENTO

FORTÙ, FORTÙ, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet!
I was sure, if I tried,

I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.

Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads ;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
—The flowers or the weeds.
Time for rain ! for your long hot dry
Autumn

Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the
bunches,

Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account
of,

Whose heads,—specked with white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night,—
Your mother bites off for her supper.
Red-ripe as could be,
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting

In halves on the tree :
And betwixt the loose walls of great
flintstone,

Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-
side,

Wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-
flower

Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies
fighting,

Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-
nets

Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-
twigs,

Sole lattice that's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down
the net-poles,

While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at
them,

The rain in their teeth.

And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover :
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the
blind-rock.

No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jollies, your sea-
fruit ;

You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all
manner

Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps ;
Himself too as bare to the middle
—You see round his neck

The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in
the vineyards

Grape-harvest began.
In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
Like blood the juice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is
dancing

Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
Since still when he seems all but master,
In pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's
driving ;

Your girls that are older,—
For under the hedges of aloe,
And where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-
apple

Lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and
filling

Their laps with the snails
 Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
 Your best of regales,
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
 When, supping in state,
 We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two
 dozen,
 Three over one plate)
 With lasagne so tempting to swallow
 In slippery ropes,
 And gourds fried in great purple
 slices,
 That colour of popes.
 Meantime, see the grape bunch they've
 brought you :
 The rain-water slips
 O'er the heavy blue bloom on' each
 globe
 Which the wasp to your lips
 Still follows with frothy persistence :
 Nay, taste, while awake,
 This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-
 ball
 That peels, flake by flake,
 Like an onion, each smoother and
 whiter ;
 Next, sip this weak wine
 From the thin green glass flask, with its
 stopper,
 A leaf of the vine ;
 And end with the prickly-pear's red
 flesh
 That leaves thro' its juice
 The stony black seeds on your pearl-
 teeth.
 Scirocco is loose !
 Hark ! the quick, whistling pelt of the
 olives
 Which, thick in one's track,
 Tempt the stranger to pick up and
 bite them,
 Tho' not yet half black !
 How the old twisted olive trunks
 shudder !
 The medlars let fall
 Their hard fruit, and the brittle great
 fig-trees
 Snap off, figs and all,
 For here comes the whole of the
 tempest !
 No refuge, but creep
 Back again to my side and my shoulder,
 And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next
 week,
 When all the vine-boughs
 Have been stripped of their foliage to
 pasture
 The mules and the cows ?
 Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;
 Your brother, my guide,
 Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
 That offered, each side,
 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and
 luscious,—
 Or strip from the sorbs
 A treasure, so rosy and wondrous,
 Of hairy gold orbs !
 But my mule picked his sure, sober
 path out,
 Just stopping to neigh
 When he recognized down in the
 valley
 His mates on their way
 With the faggots, and barrels of water ;
 And soon we emerged
 From the plain, where the woods could
 scarce follow ;
 And still as we urged
 Our way, the woods wondered, and
 left us,
 As up still we trudged
 Though the wild path grew wilder each
 instant,
 And place was e'en grudged
 'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose
 stones
 Like the loose broken teeth
 Of some monster which climbed there
 to die
 From the ocean beneath—
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey
 fume-weed,
 That clung to the path,
 And dark rosemary ever a-dying
 That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
 And lentisks as staunch
 To the stone where they root and bear
 berries,
 And . . . what shows a branch
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with cir-
 clets
 Of pale seagreen leaves :
 Over all trod my mule with the caution
 Of gleaners o'er sheaves,

Still, foot after foot like a lady :
 So, round after round,
 He climbed to the top of Calvano,
 And God's own profound
 Was above me, and round me the
 mountains,
 And under, the sea,
 And within me, my heart to bear witness
 What was and shall be !
 Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal !
 No rampart excludes
 Your eye from the life to be lived
 In the blue solitudes !
 Oh, those mountains, their infinite
 movement !
 Still moving with you ;
 For, ever some new head and breast of
 them
 Thrusts into view
 To observe the intruder ; you see it
 If quickly you turn
 And, before they escape you, surprise
 them :
 They grudge you should learn
 How the soft plains they look on, lean over
 And love (they pretend)
 —Cower beneath them, the flat sea-
 pine crouches,
 The wild fruit-trees bend,
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and
 shut,
 All is silent and grave,
 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,
 How fair, but a slave !
 So, I turned to the sea ; and there
 slumbered
 As greenly as ever
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli ;
 No ages can sever
 The Three, nor enable their sister
 To join them,—halfway
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
 No further to-day,
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the
 wave,
 Watches breast-high and steady
 From under the rock, her bold sister
 Swum halfway already.
 Forth, shall we sail there together
 And see from the sides
 Quite new rocks show their faces, new
 haunts
 Where the siren abides ?

Shall we sail round and round them,
 close over
 The rocks, tho' unseen,
 That ruffle the grey glassy water
 To glorious green ?
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
 Reach land and explore,
 On the largest, the strange square black
 turret
 With never a door,
 Just a loop to admit the quick lizards ;
 Then, stand there and hear
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
 What life is, so clear ?
 —The secret they sang to Ulysses
 When, ages ago,
 He heard and he knew this life's secret
 I hear and I know !
 Ah, see ! The sun breaks o'er Calvano ;
 He strikes the great gloom
 And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
 In airy gold fume !
 All is over ! Look out, see the gipsy,
 Our tinker and smith,
 Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
 And down-squatted forthwith
 To his hammering, under the wall
 there ;
 One eye keeps aloof
 The urchins that itch to be putting
 His jews'-harps to proof,
 While the other, thro' locks of curled
 wire,
 Is watching how sleek
 Shines the hog, come to share in the
 windfall
 —An abbot's own cheek.
 All is over ! Wake up and come out
 now,
 And down let us go,
 And see the fine things got in order
 At Church for the show
 Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening ;
 To-morrow's the Feast
 Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
 Of Virgins the least,
 As you'll hear in the off-hand dis-
 course
 Which (all nature, no art)
 The Dominican brother, these three
 weeks,
 Was getting by heart.

Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
 With red and blue papers ;
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each
 altar
 A-blaze with long tapers ;
 But the great masterpiece is the
 scaffold
 Rigg'd glorious to hold
 All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
 And trumpeters bold,
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,
 Will strike us up something that's brisk
 For the feast's second course.
 And then will the flaxen-wigg'd Image
 Be carried in pomp
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant pro-
 cession
 The priests mean to stomp.
 And all round the glad church lie old
 bottles
 With gunpowder stopped,
 Which will be, when the Image re-
 enters,
 Religiously popped.
 And at night from the crest of Calvano
 Great bonfires will hang,
 On the plain will the trumpets join
 chorus,
 And more poppers bang !
 At all events, come—to the garden,
 As far as the wall ;
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
 Till out there shall fall
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers !

—' Such trifles ! ' you say ?
 Fortè, in my England at home,
 Men meet gravely to-day
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
 Be righteous and wise
 —If 'twere proper, Scirocco should
 vanish
 In black from the skies !

IN A GONDOLA

He sings

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my
 heart
 In this my singing
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears
 part ;
 The very night is clinging

Closer to Venice's streets to leave one space
 Above me, whence thy face
 May light my joyous heart to thee its
 dwelling-place.

She speaks

Say after me, and try to say
 My very words, as if each word
 Came from you of your own accord.
 In your own voice, in your own way :
 ' This woman's heart and soul and brain
 Are mine as much as this gold chain
 She bids me wear ; which ' (say again)
 ' I choose to make by cherishing
 A precious thing, or choose to fling
 Over the boat-side, ring by ring.'
 And yet once more say . . . no word
 more !

Since words are only words. Give o'er !
 Unless you call me, all the same,
 Familiarly by my pet-name
 Which, if the Three should hear you call,
 And me reply to, would proclaim
 At once our secret to them all.
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
 Do, break down the partition-wall
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.
 What's left but—all of me to take ?
 I am the Three's : prevent them, slake
 Your thirst ! 'Tis said, the Arab sage
 In practising with gems can loose
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce
 And leave but ashes : so, sweet mage,
 Leave them my ashes when thy use
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage !

He sings

I

Past we glide, and past, and past !
 What's that poor Agnese doing
 Where they make the shutters fast ?
 Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing
 To his couch the purchased bride :
 Past we glide !

II

Past we glide, and past, and past !
 Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
 Like a beacon to the blast ?
 Guests by hundreds, not one caring
 If the dear host's neck were wried :
 Past we glide !

She sings

I

The Moth's kiss, first !
 Kiss me as if you made believe
 You were not sure, this eve,
 How my face, your flower, had pursed
 Its petals up ; so, here and there
 You brush it, till I grow aware
 Who wants me, and wide open burst.

II

The Bee's kiss, now !
 Kiss me as if you entered gay
 My heart at some noonday,
 A bud that dares not disallow
 The claim, so all is rendered up,
 And passively it shattered cup
 Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings

I

What are we two ?
 I am a Jew,
 And carry thee, farther than friends
 can pursue,
 To a feast of our tribe ;
 Where they need thee to bribe
 The devil that blasts them unless he
 imbibe
 Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever !
 And now,
 As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

II

Say again, what we are ?
 The sprite of a star,
 I lure thee above where the destinies
 bar
 My plumes their full play
 Till a ruddier ray
 Than my pale one announce there is
 withering away
 Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever !
 And now,
 As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou !

He muses

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest ?
 The land's lap or the water's breast ?
 To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
 Or swim in lucid shallows, just
 Eluding water-lily leaves,

An inch from Death's black fingers,
 thrust

To lock you, whom release he must ;
 Which life were best on Summer eves ?

He speaks, musing

Lie back ; could thought of mine
 improve you ?

From this shoulder let there spring
 A wing ; from this, another wing :
 Wings, not legs and feet, shall move
 you !

Snow-white must they spring, to blend
 With your flesh, but I intend
 They shall deepen to the end,
 Broader, into burning gold,
 Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
 Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
 To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
 As if a million sword-blades hurled
 Defiance from you to the world !

Rescue me Thou, the only real !
 And scare away this mad Ideal

That came, nor motions to depart !
 Thanks ! Now, stay ever as thou art !

Still he muses

I

What if the Three should catch at last
 Thy serenader ? While there's cast
 Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
 Gian pinions me, Himself has past
 His stylet thro' my back ; I reel ;
 And . . . is it Thou I feel ?

II

They trail me, these three godless
 knaves,

Past every church that sains and saves,
 Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
 By Lido's wet accursed graves,
 They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
 And . . . on Thy breast I sink !

She replies, musing

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-
 deep,

As I do : thus : were death so unlike
 sleep,

Caught this way ? Death's to fear
 from flame, or steel,

Or poison doubtless ; but from water—
 feel !

Go find the bottom ! Would you stay
me ! There !

Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-
grass

To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away : since you have praised
my hair,

'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks

Row home ? must we row home ? Too
surely

Know I where its front 's demurely
Over the Giudicca piled ;

Window just with window mating,

Door on door exactly waiting,

All 's the set face of a child :

But behind it, where 's a trace

Of the staidness and reserve,

And formal lines without a curve,

In the same child's playing-face ?

No two windows look one way

O'er the small sea-water thread

Below them. Ah, the autumn day

I, passing, saw you overhead !

First, out a cloud of curtain blew,

Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you—

To catch your loory that must needs

Escape just then, of all times then,

To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,

And make me happiest of men.

I scarce could breathe to see you reach

So far back o'er the balcony,

(To catch him ere he climbed too high

Above you in the Smyrna peach)

That quick the round smooth cord of
gold,

This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,

Fell down you like a gorgeous snake

The Roman girls were wont, of old,

When Rome there was, for coolness'
sake

To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.

Dear loory, may his beak retain

Ever its delicate rose stain

As if the wounded lotus-blossoms

Had marked their thief to know again !

Stay longer yet, for others' sake

Than mine ! what should your chamber
do ?

—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake

At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
That brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day last-
weave

Around them such a magic tether
That they look dumb : your harp,
believe,

With all the sensitive tight strings

That dare not speak, now to itself

Breathes slumberously as if some elf

Went in and out the chords, his wings

Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,

As an angel may, between the maze

Of midnight palace-pillars, on

And on, to sow God's plagues have gone

Through guilty glorious Babylon.

And while such murmurs flow, the
nymph

Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell

As the dry limpet for the lymph

Come with a tune he knows so well.

And how your statues' hearts must
swell !

And how your pictures must descend

To see each other, friend with friend !

Oh, could you take them by surprise,

You'd find Schidone's eager Duke

Doing the quaintest courtesies

To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke !

And, deeper into her rock den,

Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen

You'd find retreated from the ken

Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—

As if the Tizian thinks of her,

And is not, rather, gravely bent

On seeing for himself what toys

Are these, his progeny invent,

What litter now the board employs

Whereon he signed a document

That got him murdered ! Each enjoys

Its night so well, you cannot break

The sport up, so, indeed must make

More stay with me, for others' sake

She speaks

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,

Is used to tie the jasmine back

That overfloods my room with sweets,

Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets

My Zanze : if the ribbon 's black,

The Three are watching ; keep away.

II

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot
stair;

That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There 's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are
we!

Only one minute more to-night with
me?

Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than
snow:

Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch
my hand

More than I touch yours when I step to
land,

And say, 'All thanks, Siora!'—

Heart to heart,
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere
we part,

Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine
thou art!

He is surprised, and stabbed

It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and
best

Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on
thy breast

Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards!
Care

Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do
not scorn

To death, because they never lived:
but I

Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one
more kiss)—can die!

WARING

I

I

WHAT 's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London-town?

II

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry
weather,

The snowiest in all December.

I left his arm that night myself

For what 's-his-name's, the new prose-
poet

That wrote the book there, on the
shelf—

How, forsooth, was I to know it

If Waring meant to glide away

Like a ghost at break of day?

Never looked he half so gay!

III

He was prouder than the Devil:

How he must have cursed our revel!

Ay, and many other meetings,

Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,

As up and down he paced this London,

With no work done, but great works
undone,

Where scarce twenty knew his name.

Why not, then, have earlier spoken,

Written, bustled? Who 's to blame

If your silence kept unbroken?

' True, but there were sundry jottings,
Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and
blottings,

Certain first steps were achieved

Already which '—(is that your mean-
ing?)

' Had well borne out whome'er believed

In more to come!' But who goes
gleaning

Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-
sheaved

Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'er-
weening

Pride alone, puts forth such claims

O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV

Meantime, how much I loved him,

I find out now I've lost him:

I, who cared not if I moved him,

Who could so carelessly accost him,

Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to
sink,

As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us !)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm !
E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost Lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavour
And goodness unrepaid as ever ;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh
never

Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to ?
Telling aught but honest truth to ?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness :
No ! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth 's a weighty matter,
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter !
Well, 'tis done with ; she 's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally ;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach ; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

V

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more !
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine ! I'd fool him to his bent !
Feed, should not he, to heart's content ?

I'd say, ' to only have conceived
Your great works, though they no'er
make progress,
Surpasses all we've yet achieved ! '
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress

Her sharp-toothed golden-crowned
child !

Or, as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture ; and completely gives
Its pettish humours licence, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed !
Travels Waring East away ?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstared
Somewhere as a God,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame ?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?
Or who, in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement, bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
To kerschiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash ?
Waring, in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures borne, perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she
always
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic
speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-
beaten beach,
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy
lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian
strands
Where breed the swallows, her melo-
dious cry
Amid their barbarous twitter !
In Russia ? Never ! Spain were fitter !
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
That we and Waring meet again

Now, while he turns down that cool
 narrow lane
 Into the blackness, out of grave
 Madrid
 All fire and shine, abrupt as when
 there's slid
 Its stiff gold blazing pall
 From some black coffin-lid.
 Or, best of all,
 I love to think
 The leaving us was just a feint ;
 Back here to London did he slink,
 And now works on without a wink
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink
 Of something great in fresco-paint :
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
 Up and down and o'er and o'er
 He splashes, as none splashed before
 Since great Caldara Polidore.
 Or Music means this land of ours
 Some favour yet, to pity won
 By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers.—
 ' Give me my so-long promised son.
 Let Waring end what I begun ! '
 Then down he creeps and out he steals
 Only when the night conceals
 His face ; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
 Or, hops are picking : or, at prime
 Of March, he wanders as, too happy.
 Years ago when he was young,
 Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
 And the early moths had sprung
 To life from many a trembling sheath
 Woven the warm boughs beneath :
 While small birds said to themselves
 What should soon be actual song.
 And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
 Made as if they were the throng
 That crowd around and carry aloft
 The sound they have nursed, so sweet
 and pure,
 Out of a myriad noises soft,
 Into a tone that can endure
 Amid the noise of a July noon
 When all God's creatures crave their boon,
 All at once and all in tune,
 And get it, happy as Waring then,
 Having first within his ken
 What a man might do with men :
 And far too glad, in the even-glow,
 To mix with the world he meant to take
 Into his hand, he told you, so—
 And out of it his world to make,

To contract and to expand
 As he shut or oped his hand.
 Oh, Waring, what 's to really be ?
 A clear stage and a crowd to see !
 Some Garrick—say—out shall not he
 The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck ?
 Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
 Some Junius—am I right ?—shall tuck
 His sleeve, and forth with flaying-
 knife !
 Some Chatterton shall have the luck
 Of calling Rowley into life !
 Some one shall somehow run a muck
 With this old world, for want of strife
 Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
 To rouse us, Waring ! Who 's alive ?
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
 Distinguished names !—but 'tis, some-
 how,
 As if they played at being names
 Still more distinguished, like the games
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
 With a visage of the sternest !
 Bring the real times back, confessed
 Still better than our very best !

II

I

' WHEN I last saw Waring . . . '
 (How all turned to him who spoke—
 You saw Waring ? Truth or joke ?
 In land-travel, or sea-faring ?)

II

' We were sailing by Triest,
 Where a day or two we harboured :
 A sunset was in the West,
 When, looking over the vessel's side,
 One of our company espied
 A sudden speck to larboard.
 And, as a sea-duck flies and swims
 At once, so came the light craft up,
 With its sole lateen sail that trims
 And turns (the water round its rims
 Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
 And by us like a fish it curled,
 And drew itself up close beside,
 Its great sail on the instant furled,
 And o'er its planks, a shrill voice cried,
 (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
 " Buy wine of us, you English Brig ?
 Or fruit, tobacco and cigars ?

A Pilot for you to Triest ?
Without one, look you ne'er so big,
They'll never let you up the bay !
We natives should know best."
I turned, and "just those fellows'
way,"
Our captain said, "The 'long-shore
thieves
Are laughing at us in their sleeves."

III
'In truth, the boy leaped laughing back;
And one, half-hidden by his side •
Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
With great grass hat and kerchief
black,
Who looked up with his kingly throat,
Said somewhat, while the other shook
His hair back from his eyes to look
Their longest at us ; then the boat,
I know not how, turned sharply round,
Laying her whole side on the sea
As a leaping fish does ; from the lee,
Into the weather, cut somehow
Her sparkling path beneath our bow ;
And so went off, as with a bound,
Into the rosy and golden half
Of the sky, to overtake the sun
And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
Its singing cave ; yet I caught one
Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
And neither time nor toil could mar
Those features : so I saw the last
Of Waring !—You ? Oh, never star
Was lost here, but it rose afar !
Look East, where whole new thousands
are !
In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?

THE TWINS

'Give' and 'It-shall-be-given-unto-you.'

I
GRAND rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the uncoucher :
Do roses stick like burrs ?

II
A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther ; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, 'We're poor !

III
'Poor, who had plenty once,
When gifts fell thick as rain :
But they give us nought, for the nonce,
And how should we give again ?'

IV
Then the beggar, 'See your sins !
Of old, unless I err,
Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
Date and Dabitur.

V
'While Date was in good case
Dabitur flourished too :
For Dabitur's lenten face,
No wonder if Date rue.

VI
'Would ye retrieve the one ?
Try and make plump the other !
When Date's penance is done,
Dabitur helps his brother.

VII
'Only, beware relapse !'
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be, perhaps,
An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN

I
So far as our story approaches the end,
Which do you pity the most of us
three ?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me ?

II
My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improve-
ment yet,
When she crossed his path with her
hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

III
When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth, for a whim !

IV

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at the wren in-
stead!

V

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to
take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest
need,
And round she turned for my noble
sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

VI

The eagle am I, with my fame in the
world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII

For see—my friend goes shaking and
white;
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to
night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
'Though I love her—that he com-
prehends—
One should master one's passions, (love,
in chief)
And be loyal to one's friends!'

IX

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try and off it came;
'Tis mine,—can I let it fall?

X

With no mind to eat it, that's the
worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would
the case assist?
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies'
thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

XI

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you
see—
What I soon shall seem to his love,
you guess.
What I seem to myself, do you ask of
me?
No hero, I confess.

XII

'Tis an awkward thing to play with
souls,
Add matter enough to save one's
own.
Yet think of my friend, and the burning
coals
He played with for bits of stone!

XIII

One likes to show the truth for the
truth;
That the woman was light is very
true:
But suppose she says,—Never mind
that youth—
What wrong have I done to you?

XIV

Well, any how, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of
plays,
Here's a subject made to your hand!

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I

I SAID—Then, Dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for,
fails,
Since this was written and needs
must be—

My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I
claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not
blame,
Your leave for one more last ride
with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers ;
Those deep dark eyes where pride
demurs *denies* ; *haughty*
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-whole or two
With life or death in the balance :
right !

The blood replenished me again *to fill*
My last thought was at least not vain :
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So one day more am I defined *immaculate*
Who knows but the world may end
to-night.

A great peaceful quietude in the world

III

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed *swayed*
By many benedictions—sun's *of sea*
And moon's and evening-star's at
once—

And so, you, looking and loving
best,

Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was
here !—

Thus leant she and lingered—joy and
fear !

Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out—a long-cramped
scroll *poetical*
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind. *life which*

What need to strive with a life awry ?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss,
Might she have loved me ? just as well
She might have hated,—who can tell ?
Where had I been now if the worst
befell ?

And here we are riding, she and I.

V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds ?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?
We rode ; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,

As the world rushed by on either
side.

Thought,—All labour, yet no less
I *look* up beneath their unsuccess.
at the end of work, contrast
The petty Done, the Undone vast,
This Present of theirs with the hopeful
Past !

I hoped she would love me : here we
ride.

skill VI *Intellect*

What hand and brain went ever
paired ?
What heart alike conceived and dared ?
What act proved all its thought had
been ? *with power*

What will but felt the fleshly screen ?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can
reach, *ward*.

Ten lines, a statesman's life in each !
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing ! what atones ? *compa*
They scratch his name on the Abbey-
stones.

My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet ? well,
Your brains beat into rhythm—you
tell

What we felt only ; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by
side.

'Tis something, nay 'tis much—but
then,
Have you yourself what's best for
men ?

Are you—poor, sick, old ere your
time—

Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a
rhyme ?

Sing, riding's a joy ! For me,
I ride.

VIII *statue*

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus—whence
turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn !

You acquiesce, and shall I repine ?
 What, man, of music, you, grown grey
 With notes and nothing else to say,
 Is this your sole praise from a friend,
 ' Greatly his opera's strains intend,
 But in music we know how fashions
 end !'

I gave my youth—but we ride, in
 fine

by in fate
 IX
 Who knows what's fit for us ? Had
 fate
 Proposed bliss here should sublimate
 My being ; had I signed the bond—
 Still one must lead some life beyond,
 —Have a bliss to die with, dim-
 described. *seen*

This ~~foot~~ once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I desery such ? Try and test !
 I sink back shuddering from the quest—
 Earth being so good, would Heaven
 seem best ?

* Now, Heaven and she are beyond
 this ride.

X
 And yet—she has not spoke so long !
 What if Heaven be that, fair and
 strong *Ph*
 At life's best, with our eyes upturned
 Whither life's flower is first discerned,
 We, fixed so, ever should so abide ?
 What if we still ride on, we two, *Play*
 With life for ever old yet new,
 Changed not in kind but in degree,
 The instant made eternity,—
 And Heaven just prove that I and she
 Ride, ride together, for ever ride ?

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A CHILD'S STORY

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M.
 THE YOUNGER)

I
 HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
 By famous Hanover city ;
 The river Weser, deep and wide,
 Washes its wall on the southern side ;
 A pleasanter spot you never spied ;

But, when begins my ditty,
 Almost five hundred years ago,
 To see the townsfolk suffer so
 From vermin, was a pity.

II

Rats !
 They fought the dogs, and killed the
 cats,
 And bit the babies in the cradles,
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
 And licked the soup from the cooks'
 own ladles,
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women's chats,
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

III

At last the people in a body
 To the Town Hall came flocking :
 ' 'Tis clear,' cried they, ' our Mayor's
 a noddy ;
 And as for our Corporation—shock-
 ing
 To think we buy gowns lined with
 ermine
 For dolts that can't or won't deter-
 mine
 What's best to rid us of our vermin !
 You hope, because you're old and
 obese,
 To find in the furry civic robe ease ?
 Rouse up, Sirs ! Give your brains a
 racking
 To find the remedy we're lacking,
 Or, sure as fate, we'll send you pack-
 ing !'
 At this the Mayor and Corporation
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sate in council,
 At length the Mayor broke silence :
 ' For a guildier I'd my ermine gown
 sell ;
 I wish I were a mile hence !
 It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
 I'm sure my poor head aches again
 I've scratched it so, and all in vain.

Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap !
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?
' Bless us,' cried the Mayor, ' what's
that ?'

(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat ;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew
mutinous

For a plate of turtle green and glu-
tinous)

' Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat !'

V

' Come in !'—the Mayor cried, looking
bigger :

And in did come the strangest figure !
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red ;
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy
skin,

No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in—
There was no guessing his kith and
kin !

And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire :
Quoth one : ' It's as my great-grand-
sire,

Starting up at the Trump of Doom's
tone,

Had walked this way from his painted
tomb-stone !'

VI

He advanced to the council-table :
And, ' Please your honours,' said he,
' I'm able,

By means of a secret charm to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep or swim or fly or run,
After me so as you never saw !

And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole and toad and newt and
viper ;

And people call me the Pied Piper.'

(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-
same cheque ;

And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever
straying

As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)

' Yet,' said he, ' poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarms of
gnats ;

I chased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :
And as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats

Will you give me a thousand guilders ?'
' One ! fifty thousand !'—was the ex-
clamation

Of the astonished Mayor and Corpora-
tion.

VII

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while ;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled.
And green and blue his sharp eyes
twinkled

Like a candle-flame where salt is
sprinkled ;

And ere three shrill notes the pipe
uttered,

You heard as if an army muttered ;
And the muttering grew to a grum-
bling ;

And the grumbling grew to a mighty
rumbling ;

And out of the houses the rats came
tumbling.

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny
rats,

Brown rats, black rats, grey rats,
tawny rats,

Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,

Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,

Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,

Families by tens and dozens,

Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—

Followed the Piper for their lives.

From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser
Wherein all plunged and perished !

—Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary :
Which was, ' At the first shrill notes of
the pipe,

I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe :
And a moving away of pickle-tub-
boards,

And a leaving ajar of conserve-cup-
boards,

And a drawing the corks of train-oil-
flasks,

And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks :
And it seemed as if a voice

(Sweeter far than by harp or by
psaltery

Is breathed) called out, Oh rats,
rejoice !

The world is grown to one vast dry-
salty !

So, munch on, crunch on, take your
nunccheon,

Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,

All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,

Just as methought it said, Come, bore
me !

—I found the Weser rolling o'er me.'

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin
people

Ring the bells till they rocked the
steeple.

' Go,' cried the Mayor, ' and get long
poles !

Poke out the nests and block up the holes !
Consult with carpenters and builders,

And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats ! '—when suddenly, up the
face

Of the Piper perked in the market-
place,

With a, ' First, if you please, my thou-
sand guilders ! '

IX

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor
looked blue ;

So did the Corporation too.

For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave,

Hock ;

And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.

To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !

' Beside,' quoth the Mayor with a
knowing wink,

Our business was done at the river's
brink ;

We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life,

I think.

So, friend, we're not the folks to
shrink

From the duty of giving you something
for drink,

And a matter of money to put in your
poke ;

But as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was

in joke.

Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
A thousand guilders ! Come, take

fifty !'

X

The piper's face fell, and he cried,
' No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !

I've promised to visit by dinner time
Bagdat, and accept the prime

Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's
rich in,

For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—

With him I proved no bargain-driver,
With you, don't think I'll bate a

stiver !

And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe to another fashion.'

XI

' How ? ' cried the Mayor, ' d'ye think
I'll brook

Being worse treated than a Cook ?
Insulted by a lazy ribald

With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?

You threaten us, fellow ? Do your
worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst !'

XII

Once more he stept into the street ;
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight
cane ;
And ere he blew thrice notes (such
sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling, that seemed like
a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching
and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes
clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues
chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when
barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like
pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily
after
The wonderful music with shouting and
laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council
stood
As if they were changed into blocks of
wood,
Unable to move, a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by—
And could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms
beat,
As the Piper turned from the High
Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and
daughters !
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps
addressed,

And after him the children pressed ;
Great was the joy in every breast.
' He never can cross that mighty top !
He's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop !'
When, lo, as they reached the moun-
tain's side,

A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;
And the Piper advanced and the
children followed,

And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut
fast.

Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the
way ;

And in after years, if you would blame—
His sadness, he was used to say,—
' It's dull in our town since my play-
mates left !

I can't forget that I'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous
land,

Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees
grew,

And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new ;
The sparrows were brighter than pea-
cocks here,

And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles'
wings :

And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the Hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more !'

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin !

There came into many a burgher's
pate

A text which says, that Heaven's
Gate

Opes to the Rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in !

The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,

To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,

Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.

But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,

And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,

They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly

If, after the day of the month and year,

These words did not as well appear,
'And so long after what happened here

On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six :
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.

Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;

But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great Church-Window painted

The same, to make the world acquainted

How their children were stolen away ;
And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,

To their fathers and mothers having risen

Out of some subterranean prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,

But how or why, they don't understand.

xv

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers :

And, whether they pipe us free, from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

I

You'RE my friend :

I was the man the Duke spoke to ;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too ;

So, here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend !

II

Ours is a great wild country :
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop ;
For when you've passed the corn-field country,

Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,

And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,

Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again

To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,

Branched through and through with many a vein

Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;

Look right, look left, look straight before,—

Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,

—And the whole is our Duke's country !

III

I was born the day this present Duke
was—

(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)

In the castle where the other Duke
was—

(When I was happy and young, not
old !)

I in the Kennel, he in the Bower :

We are of like age to an hour.

My father was Huntsman in that day ;

Who has not heard my father say :

That, when a boar was brought to bay.

Three times, four times out of five,

With his huntspear he'd contrive

To get the killing-place transfixed,

And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?

And that's why the old Duke would
rather

He lost a salt-pit than my father,

And loved to have him ever in call :

That's why my father stood in the
hall

When the old Duke brought his infant
out

To show the people, and while they
passed

The wondrous bantling round about,

Was first to start at the outside blast

As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,

Just a month after the babe was born.

'And,' quoth the Kaiser's courier,
'since

The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side : '

The Duke looked down and seemed to
wince,

But he thought of wars o'er the world
wide,

Castles a-fire, men on their march,

The toppling tower, the crashing arch ;

And up he looked, and awhile he eyed

The row of crests and shields and
banners,

Of all achievements after all manners,

And 'ay,' said the Duke with a surly
pride.

The more was his comfort when he
died

At next year's end, in a velvet suit,

With a gilt glove on his hand, and his
foot

In a silken shoe for a leather boot,

Petticoated like a herald,

In a chamber next to an ante-room,

Where he breathed the breath of page
and groom,

What he called stink, and they, per-
fume :

—They should have set him on red
Berold,

Mad with pride, like fire to manage !

They should have got his cheek fresh
tannage

Such a day as to-day in the merry sun-
shine !

Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot
merlin !

(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its
game !

Oh for a noble falcon-lanner

To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like
flame !)

Had they broached a cask of white beer
from Berlin !

—Or if you incline to prescribe mere
wine

Put to his lips when they saw him pine,

A cup of our own Moldavia fine,

Cotnar, for instance, green as May
sorrel,

And ropy with sweet,—we shall not
quarrel.

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow
Duchess

Was left with the infant in her clutches,

She being the daughter of God knows
who :

And now was the time to revisit her
tribe,

So, abroad and afar they went, the
two,

And let our people rail and gibe

At the empty Hall and extinguished
fire.

As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,

Till after long years we had our desire,

And back came the Duke and his
mother again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape

That ever affronted human shape ;

Full of his travel, struck at himself.

You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways ?

—Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf

That our rough North land was the Land of Lays,

The one good thing left in evil days ;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,

And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,

And see true castles, with proper towers,

Young-hearted women, old-minded men,

And manners now as manners were then.

So, all that the old Dukes had been,
without knowing it,

This Duke would fain know he was,
without being it ;

'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy
of his showing it,

Nor for the pride's self, but the pride
of our seeing it,

He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,

The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts
of them torn-out :

And chief in the chase his neck he
perilled,

On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength ;

—They should have set him on red Berold,

With the red eye slow consuming in fire,

And the thin stiff ear like an abbey
spire !

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry,
we heard :

And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the Lady, in time of spring.

—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they
cling !

That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes

Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to
muffle.

But the Duke had a mind we should cut
a figure,

And so we saw the Lady arrive :

My friend, I have seen a white crane
bigger !

She was the smallest lady alive,
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and glad-
ness

That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high
trees

Is crowded with its safe merry bees :
In truth, she was not hard to please !

Up she looked, down she looked, round
at the mead,

Straight at the castle, that's best
indeed

To look at from outside the walls :
As for us, styled the ' serfs and thralls,'

She as much thanked me as if she had
said it,

(With her eyes, do you understand ?)
Because I patted her horse while I led
it ;

And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired

What its true name was, nor ever
seemed tired—

If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the
field was the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke :

And as down she sprung, the small foot
pointed

On to my hand,—as with a rebuko,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,

The Duke stepped rather aside than
forward,

And welcomed her with his grandest
smile ;

And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to
Nor'ward ;

And up, like a weary yawn, with its
pullies

Went, in a shriek, the rusty portecullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind
sullies,

The Lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey—

For such things must begin some one
day !

VII

In a day or two she was well again ;
 As who should say, ' You labour in
 vain !
 This is all a jest against God, who
 meant
 I should ever be, as I am, content
 And glad in His sight ; therefore, glad
 I will be ! '
 So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire—
 Could not rest, could not tire—
 To a stone she might have given life !
 (I myself loved once, in my day)
 —For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Hunts-
 man's wife,
 (I had a wife, I know what I say)
 Never in all the world such an one !
 And here was plenty to be done,
 And she that could do it, great or
 small,
 She was to do nothing at all.
 There was already this man in his post,
 This in his station, and that in his
 office,
 And the Duke's plan admitted a wife,
 at most,
 To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
 Now outside the Hall, now in it,
 To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
 At the proper place in the proper
 minute,
 And die away the life between.
 And it was amusing enough, each
 infraction
 Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)
 To hear the consummate self-satis-
 faction
 With which the young Duke and the
 old Dame
 Would let her advise, and criticise,
 And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
 And, child-like, parcel out praise or
 blame :
 They bore it all in complacent guise,
 As though an artificer, after contriving
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,
 Should find with delight it could motion
 to strike him !
 So found the Duke, and his mother like
 him :

The Lady hardly got a rebuff—
 That had not been contemptuous
 enough,
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded
 applause,
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,
 Paling and ever paling,
 As the way is with a hid chagrin ;
 And the Duke perceived that she
 was ailing,
 And said in his heart, ' 'Tis done to
 spite me,
 But I shall find in my power to right
 me ! '
 Don't swear, friend—the Old One,
 many a year,
 Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you
 shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-
 warning,
 When the stag had to break with his
 foot, of a morning,
 A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender
 ice,
 That covered the pond till the sun, in
 a trice,
 Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
 And another and another, and faster
 and faster,
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide
 water rolled :
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our
 master
 Asked himself what were the pleasures
 in season,
 And found, since the calendar bade
 him be hearty,
 He should do the Middelé Age no treason
 In resolving on a hunting-party.
 Always provided, old books showed the
 way of it !
 What meant old poets by their strictures ?
 And when old poets had said their say
 of it,
 How taught old painters in their
 pictures ?
 We must revert to the proper channels,
 Workings in tapestry, paintings on
 panels,

And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions :

Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated,

—To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,

'Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup—

We of the household took thought and debated.

Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin

His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blessed he who nobly sunk 'ohs'

And 'ahs' while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose ;

What signified hats if they had no rims on,

Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,

And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?

So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,

What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,

Might hope for real hunters at length,
and not murderers,

And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on't !

XI

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness

Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,

The Duke put this question, 'The Duke's part provided,

Had not the Duchess some share in the business ?'

For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses

Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :
And after much laying of heads together,

Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction

That he had discovered the lady's function ;

Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
'When horns wind a mort and the deer

is at siege,

Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,

And with water to wash the hands of her liege

In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
Let her preside at the disemboweling.'

Now, my friend, if you had so little religion

As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,

And thrust her broad wings like a banner

Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
And if day by day, and week by week,

You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,

Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an

airing,
You found she needed a little preparing ?

—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,

If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?

Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,

Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,

In what a pleasure she was to participate,—

And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,

As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate.

And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,

But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,

Of the weight by day and the watch by night,

And much wrong now that used to be right,

So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—

Was conduct ever more affronting ?
With all the ceremony settled—

With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,

And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,

Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-ball'd,—

No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
 And when she persisted nevertheless,—
 Well, I suppose here's the time to
 confess
 That there ran half round our Lady's
 chamber
 A balcony none of the hardest to
 clamber ;
 And that Jacynth the tire-woman,
 ready in waiting,
 Stayed in call outside, what need of
 relating ?
 And since Jacynth was like a June rose,
 why, a fervent
 Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your
 servant ;
 And if she had the habit to peep through
 the casement,
 How could I keep at any vast dis-
 tance ?
 And so, as I say, on the Lady's per-
 sistence,
 The Duke, dumb stricken with amaze-
 ment,
 Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
 And then, with a smile that partook of
 the awful,
 Turned her over to his yellow mother
 To learn what was decorous and lawful ;
 And the mother smelt blood with a
 cat-like instinct,
 As her cheek quick whitened thro' all
 its quince-tinct.
 Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth
 at once !
 What meant she ?—Who was she ?—
 Her duty and station,
 The wisdom of age and the folly of
 youth, at once,
 Its decent regard and its fitting rela-
 tion—
 In brief, my friend, set all the devils in
 hell free
 And turn them out to carouse in a
 belfry,
 And treat the priests to a fifty-part
 canon,
 And then you may guess how that
 tongue of hers ran on !
 Well, somehow or other it ended at
 last
 And, licking her whiskers, out she
 passed ;

And after her,—making (he hoped) a
 face
 Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
 Stalked the Duke's self with the austere
 grace
 Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
 From door to staircase—oh, such a
 solemn
 Unbending of the vertebral column !

XII

However, at sunrise our company
 mustered ;
 And here was the huntsman bidding
 unkenel,
 And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker
 blustered,
 With feather dank as a bough of wet
 fennel ;
 For the court-yard's four walls were
 filled with fog
 You might cut as an axe chops a log.
 Like so much wool for colour and
 bulkiness ;
 And out rode the Duke in a perfect
 sulkiness,
 Since, before breakfast, a man feels but
 queasily,
 And a sinking at the lower abdomen
 Begins the day with indifferent omen.
 And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
 The sun ploughed the fog up and drove
 it asunder
 This way and that from the valley
 under ;
 And, looking through the court-yard
 arch,
 Down in the valley, what should meet
 him
 But a troop of Gipsies on their march,
 No doubt with the annual gifts to greet
 him.

XIII

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you,
 only
 After reaching all lands beside ;
 North they go, South they go, trooping
 or lonely,
 And still, as they travel far and wide,
 Catch they and keep now a trace here,
 a trace there,
 That puts you in mind of a place here,
 a place there.

But with us, I believe they rise out of
 the ground,
 And nowhere else, I take it, are found
 With the earth-tint yet so freshly
 embrowned;
 Born, no doubt, like insects which breed
 on
 The very fruit they are meant to feed
 on.
 For the earth—not a use to which they
 don't turn it,
 The ore that grows in the mountain's
 womb,
 Or the sand in the pits like a honey-
 comb,
 They sift and soften it, bake it and burn
 it—
 Whether they weld you, for instance,
 a snaffle
 With side-bars never a brute can
 baffle;
 Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards
 within wards;
 Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to
 curve inwards,
 Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn
 on a swivel
 And won't allow the hoof to survive.
 Then they cast bells like the shell of the
 winkle,
 That keep a stout heart in the ram
 with their tinkle;
 But the sand—they pinch and pound
 it like otters;
 Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers
 and potters!
 Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
 Where just a faint cloud of rose shall
 appear,
 As if in pure water you dropped and let
 die
 A bruise black-blooded mulberry;
 And that other sort, their crowning
 pride,
 With long white threads distinct in-
 side,
 Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots
 which dangle
 Loose such a length and never tangle,
 Where the bold sword-lily cuts the
 clear waters,
 And the cup-lily couches with all the
 white daughters:

Such are the works they put their hand
 to,
 And the uses they turn and twist iron
 and sand to.
 And these made the troop, which our
 Duke saw sally
 Towards his castle from out of the
 valley,
 Men and women, like new-hatched
 spiders,
 Come out with the morning to greet
 our riders.
 And up they wound till they reached
 the ditch,
 Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,
 That I knew, as she hobbled from the
 group,
 By her gait, directly, and her stoop,
 I, whom Jacynth was used to impor-
 tune
 To let that same witch tell us our
 fortune.
 The oldest Gipsy then above ground:
 And, so sure as the autumn season
 came round,
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
 And every time, as she swore, for the
 last time.
 And presently she was seen to sidle
 Up to the Duke till she touched his
 bridle,
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up
 As under its nose the old witch peered
 up
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-
 holes
 Of no use now but to gather brine,
 And began a kind of level whine
 Such as they used to sing to their viols
 When their ditties they go grinding
 Up and down with nobody minding:
 And, then as of old, at the end of the
 humming
 Her usual presents were forthcoming
 —A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of
 trebles,
 (Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen
 fine pebbles,)
 Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on
 a pipe-end,—
 And so she awaited her annual stipend.
 But this time, the Duke would scarcely
 vouchsafe

A word in reply ; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch
safe,—

Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful
beauty.

No sooner had she named his Lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel
meaning—

For it struck him, the babe just wanted
weaning ;

If one gave her a taste of what life was
and sorrow,

She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-
morrow ;

And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent wellnigh
double ?

So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural
fur-suit)

He was contrasting, 'twas plain from
his gesture,

The life of the Lady so flower-like and
delicate

With the loathsome squalor of this
helicat.

I, in brief, was the man the Duke
beckoned

From out of the throng, and while I
drew near

He told the crone, as I since have
reckoned

By the way he bent and spoke into her
ear

With circumspection and mystery,
'The main of the Lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude ;

And for all the crone's submissive
attitude

I could see round her mouth the loose
plaits tightening,

And her brow with assenting intelli-
gence brightening.

As though, she engaged with hearty
goodwill

Whatever he now might enjoy to fulfil,

And promised the Lady a thorough
frightening.

And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who
imps

The wing of the hawk that shall fetch
the hernshaw,

He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To while away a weary hour

For the Lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diver-
sion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the
mere curveter,

Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman
and servitor,

And back I turned and bade the crone
follow.

And what makes me confident what 's
to be told you

Had all along been of this crone's
devising.

Is, that, on looking round sharply,
behold you,

There was a novelty quick as surpris-
ing :

For first, she had shot up a full head in
stature,

And her step kept pace with mine nor
faltered,

As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly
altered,

And the face looked quite of another
nature,

And the change reached too, whatever
the change meant,

Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrange-
ment :

For where its tatters hung loose like
sedges,

Gold coins were glittering on the
edges,

Like the band-roll strung with toman
Which proves the veil a Persian
woman's :

And under her brow, like a 'snail's
horns newly

Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their
places.

So, we went and found Jacynth at the
entry

Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my
companion,

And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same
token,

Not a single word had the Lady
spoken :

They went in both to the presence
together,

While I in the balcony watched the
weather.

xv

And now, what took place at the very
first of all,

I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to
fall

On that little head of hers and burn it,
If she knew how she came to drop so
soundly

Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin
you

'Twixt the eyes where the life holds
garrison,

—Jacynth forgive me the comparison !
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the
balcony,

And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open
country,

From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not
one tree.

When, in a moment, my ear was
arrested

By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument
playing

In the chamber ?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,

In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door ;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the Lady's head and face intent :
For, coiled at her feet like a child at
ease,

The Lady sat between her knees
And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands
met,

And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of
the crone

Wherein the eyes had grown and
grown

As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil

—Very like, by her hands, slow fan-
ning,

As up and down like a gor-crow's
flappers

They moved to measure, or bell
clappers.

I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque
you—

Those hands and fingers with no flesh
on ?

But, just as I thought to spring in to
the rescue,

At once I was stopped by the Lady's
expression :

For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above un-
winking,

—Life's pure fire received without
shrinking,

Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were
leaving,

—Life, that filling her, passed re-
dundant

Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the
white throat curving,

And the very tresses shared in the
pleasure,

Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.

I stopped short, more and more con-
founded,

As still her cheeks burned and eyes
glistened,

As she listened and she listened :
When all at once a hand detained me,
And the selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous
chime,

Making out words and prose and
rhyme,

Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and
dropped

From under the words it first 'had
propped,

And left them midway in the world,
And word took word as hand takes
hand,

I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said :—

'And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey through,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain :
I trace them the vein and the other
vein

That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark ;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap and burst and
flee,

Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that round young cheek of
thine

I make them recognise the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale aloft
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
For so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest—

When the breast is bare and the arms
are wide,

And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are
sure ;

Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain
tomb,—

Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on its finder's heart ;
So, trial after trial past,

Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore ;

And thou shalt know, those arms once
curled

About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the
world.

Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve !
Stand up, look below,

It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy ;
Not a power of life but we'll employ
To satisfy thy nature's want ;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the
tree—

Canst thou help us, must we help thee ?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world
has done ;

Though each apart were never so
weak,

Yet vainly through the world should
ye seek

For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right :
So, to approach, at least, that end,
And blend,—as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee,
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and
down,

Up and about, with blossoms and
leaves ?

Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown.

Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves.

Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere ?

Or is the other fate in store.

And art thou fitted to adore,

To give thy wondrous self away,

And take a stronger nature's sway ?

I foresee and I could foretell

Thy future portion, sure and well—

But those passionate eyes speak true,
speak true,

And let them say what thou shalt do !

Only, be sure thy daily life,

In its peace, or in its strife,

Never shall be unobserved ;

We pursue thy whole career,

And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—

Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved.

We are beside thee, in all thy ways,

With our blame, with our praise,

• Our shame to feel, our pride to show,

Glad, angry—but indifferent, no !

Whether it is thy lot to go,

For the good of us all, where the haters
meet

In the crowded city's horrible street ;

Or thou step alone through the morass

Where never sound yet was

Save the dry quick clap of the stork's
bill.

For the air is still, and the water still,

When the blue breast of the dipping coot

Dives under, and all is mute.

So at the last shall come old age,

Decrepit as befits that stage ;

How else wouldst thou retire apart

With the hoarded memories of thy
heart,

And gather all to the very least

Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,

Let fall through eagerness to find

The crowning dainties yet behind ?

Ponder on the entire Past

Laid together thus at last,

When the twilight helps to fuse

The first fresh, with the faded hues,

And the outline of the whole,

As round eve's shades their framework
roll,

Grandly fronts for once thy soul.

And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then—'

Ay, then, indeed, something
would happen !

But what ? For here her voice changed
like a bird's ;

There grew more of the music and less
of the words ;

Had Jacynth only been by me to clap
pen

Te paper and put you down every
syllable

With those clever clerkly fingers,

All that I've forgotten as well as what
lingers

In this old brain of mine that 's but ill
able

To give you even this poor version

Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with
stammering

—More fault of those who had the
hammering

Of prosody into me and syntax,

And did it, not with hobnails but tin-
tacks !

But to return from this excursion.—

Just, do you mark, when the song was
sweetest,

The peace most deep and the charm
completest,

There came, shall I say, a snap—

And the charm vanished !

And my sense returned, so strangely
banished,

And, starting as from a nap,

I knew the crone was bewitching my
lady,

With Jacynth asleep ; and but one
spring made I,

Down from the casement, round to the
portal,

Another minute and I had entered.—

When the door opened, and more than
mortal

Stood, with a face where to my mind
centred

All beauties I ever saw or shall see,

The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by
palsy.

She was so different, happy and beautiful,
 I felt at once that all was best,
 And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
 But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
 Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,
 —I saw the glory of her eye,
 And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
 And I was hers to live or to die.
 As for finding what she wanted,
 You know God Almighty granted
 Such little signs should serve his wild creatures
 To tell one another all their desires,
 So that each knows what its friend requires,
 And does its bidding without teachers.
 I preceded her; the crone
 Followed silent and alone;
 I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
 In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
 Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
 In short, the soul in its body sunk
 Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
 We descended, I preceding;
 Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
 All the world was at the chase,
 The court-yard like a desert-place,
 The stable emptied of its small fry;
 I saddled myself the very palfrey
 I remember patting while it carried her,
 The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
 And, do you know, though it's easy
 Deceiving
 Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
 The Lady had not forgotten it either,
 And knew the poor devil so much
 Beneath her
 Would have been only too glad for her service
 To dance on hot ploughshares like a
 Turk dervise,
 But unable to pay proper duty where
 Owning it
 Was reduced to that pitiful method of
 Showing it:

For though the moment I began setting
 His saddle on my own nag of Berold's
 Begetting,
 (Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
 She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,
 And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
 And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
 I say, although she never used me,
 Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy
 Behind her,
 And I ventured to remind her,
 I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
 Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
 —Something to the effect that I was in readiness
 Whenever God should please she
 Needed me,—
 Then, do you know, her face looked
 Down on me
 With a look that placed a crown on me,
 And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her
 Bosom—
 And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
 Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a piece
 Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
 Why, you see, as soon as I found
 Myself
 So understood,—that a true heart so
 May gain
 Such a reward,—I should have gone
 Home again,
 Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned
 Myself!
 It was a little plait of hair
 Such as friends in a convent make
 To wear, each for the other's sake,—
 This, see, which at my breast I wear,
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudging-
 ment),
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
 And then,—and then,—to cut short,—
 This is idle,
 These are feelings it is not good to
 Foster,—
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the
 Bridle,
 And the palfrey bounded,—and so we
 Lost her.

XVI

When the liquor's out, why clink the
cannakin ?

I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master
the manakin.

And what was the pitch of his mother's
yellowness,

How she turned as a shark to snap the
spare-rib

Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-
diving Carib,

When she heard, what she called, the
flight of the feloness

—But it seems such child's play.

What they said and did with the Lady
away !

And to dance on, when we've lost the
music,

Always made me—and no doubt makes
you—sick.

Nay, to my mind, the world's face
looked so stern

As that sweet form disappeared through
the postern,

She that kept it in constant good
humour,

It ought to have stopped ; there seemed
nothing to do more.

But the world thought otherwise and
went on,

And my head's one that its spite was
spent on :

Thirty years are fled since that morn-
ing,

And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,

As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder

Not suffered to empty its poison-
bladder :

But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story
to wake it,

For the wound in the Duke's pride
rankled fiery,

So, they made no search and small
inquiry—

And when fresh Gipsies have paid us
a visit, I've

Noticed the couple were never inquisi-
tive,

But told them they're folks the Duke
don't want here,

And bade them make haste and cross
the frontier.

Brief, the Duchess was gone and the
Duke was glad of it.

And the old one was in the young one's
stead,

And took, in her place, the household's
head,

And a blessed time the household had
of it !

And were I not, as a man may say,
cautious

How I trench, more than needs, on the
nauseous,

I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the
Duchess

Heightened the mellowness of her
cheek's yellowness

(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster

Of mucus and fucus from mere use of
ceruse :

In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You're my friend—

What a thing friendship is, world
without end !

How it gives the heart and soul a
stir-up

As if somebody broached you a glorious
runlet,

And poured out, all lovelily, sparklingly,
sunlit,

Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—

Friendship may match with that
monarch of fluids ;

Each supplies a dry brain, fills you its
ins-and-outs,

Gives your life's hour-glass a shake
when the thin sand doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and
guarantees

Age is not all made of stark sloth and
arrant ease.

I have seen my little Lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the
rest of it,

For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you
before ;
I always wanted to make a clean breast
of it :
And now it is made—why, my heart's-
blood, that went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy
dribblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the
main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the
giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do :
I must see this fellow his sad life
through—
He is our Duke, after all.
And I, as he says, but a serf and
thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son
with :
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and
get done with,
So, I must stay till the end of the
chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-
adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a
morion,
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll
kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of
our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown
with a blue crust,
Then, I shall scrape together my earn-
ings ;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth
reposes,
And our children all went the way of
the roses :
It's a long lane that knows no turn-
ings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in ;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue :
And for a staff, what beats the javélin
With which his boars my father pinned
you ?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear
presently,

Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump
skinfull,
I shall go journeying, who but I,
pleasantly !
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age ? He must hurry
more, that's all ;
Cram in a day, what his youth took
a year to hold :
When we mind labour, then only,
we're too old—
What age had Methusalem when he
begat Saul ?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted
ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-
parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the
Gipsies,
And find my Lady, or hear the last
news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with
wrcathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at
a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows
each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
' You never know then, how it all
ended,
What fortunes good or bad attended
The little Lady your Queen befriended ?'
—And when that's told me, what's
remaining ?
This world's too hard for my explain-
ing.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-
year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty
Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French
weak wine,
He also must be such a Lady's scorner !
Smooth Jacob still robs homely
Esau :
Now up, now down, the world's one
see-saw.
—So, I shall find out some snug cotner

Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
 Turn myself round and bid the world
 good night;
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's
 blowing
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us lay-
 men)
 To a world where will be no further
 throwing
 Pearls before swine that can't value
 them. Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

[Time—Shortly after the revival of
 learning in Europe.]

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.

Leave we the common crofts, the
 vulgar thorpes,

Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the
 plain,

Cared-for till cock-crow:
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row!

That's the appropriate country; there,
 man's thought,
 Rarer, intenser,

Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it
 ought,

Chafes in the censer!
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd
 and crop;

Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citted to the top,
 Crowded with culture!

All the peaks soar, but one the rest
 excels;

Clouds overcome it;
 No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit!

Thither our path lies; wind we up the
 heights:

Wait ye the warning?
 Our low life was the level's and the
 night's;

He's for the morning!
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect the
 head,

Ware the beholders!

This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling
 thorpe and croft,

Safe from the weather!
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and
 throat,

Lyric Apollo!

Long he lived nameless: how should
 spring take note

Winter would follow?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was
 gone!

Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, 'New measures, other feet
 anon!

My dance is finished,
 No, that's the world's way! (keep the
 mountain-side,

Make for the city,)

He knew the signal, and stepped on
 with pride

Over men's pity;
 Left play for work, and grappled with
 the world—

Bent on escaping:
 'What's in the scroll,' quoth he, 'thou
 keepest furled?

Show me their shaping,
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard
 and sage,—

Give!—So he gowned him,
 Straight got by heart that book to its
 last page:

Learned, we found him!
 Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes
 like lead,

Accents uncertain:
 'Time to taste life,' another would
 have said,

'Up with the curtain!—
 This man said rather, 'Actual life comes
 next? to learn—

Patience a moment!
 Grant, I have mastered learning's
 crabbed text,

Still, there's the comment.
 Let me know all! Prate not of most
 or least,

Painful or easy:

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the
feast.

Ay, nor feel queasy !'

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,

When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to
give !

Sooner, he spurned it.

Image the whole, then execute the
parts—

Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire
from quartz,

Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here 's the town-gate reached : there 's
the market-place

Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus)

That before living he 'd learn how to
live—

No end to learning :

Earn the means first—God surely will
contrive

Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say—' But time
escapes !

Live now or never !'

He said, ' What 's time ? leave Now for
dogs and apes !

Man has Forever.

Back to his book then : deeper drooped
his head :

Calculus racked him :

Leadens before, his eyes grew dross of
lead :

Tussis attacked him.

' Now, Master, take a little rest !'—not
he !

(Caution redoubled !

Step two a-breast, the way winds
narrowly)

Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon—

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred
thirst)

Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
Bad is our bargain !

Was it not great ? did not he throw on
God,

(He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly
period

Perfect the earthen ?

Did not he magnify the mind, show
clear

Just what it all meant ?

He would not discount life, as fools do
here,

Paid by instalment !

He ventured neck or nothing—Heaven's
success

Found, or earth's failure :

' Wilt thou trust death or not ?' He
answered ' Yes !

Hence with life's pale lure !'

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it :

This high man, with a great thing to
pursue,

Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to
one,

His hundred 's soon hit :

This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he
need the next,

Let the world mind him !

This, throws himself on God, and un-
perplex

Seeking shall find Him.

So, with the throttling hands of Death
at strife,

Ground he at grammar ;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech
were rife :

While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti's* business—let it
be !—

Properly based *Own*—

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.

Well, here 's the platform, here 's the
proper place.

Hail to your purlieus,—

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews !

Here 's the top-peak ! the multitude
below

Live, for they can, there.

This man decided not to Live but
Know—

Bury this man there ?

Here—here 's his place, where meteors
shoot, clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go ! let joy break with
the storm,

Peace let the dew send !

Lofty designs must close in like effects :
Loftily lying,

Leave him—still loftier than the world
suspects,

Living and dying. ————— ✓

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MED- TATION

THERE 's heaven above, and night by
night,

I look right through its gorgeous
roof ;

No suns and moons though e'er so
bright

Avail to stop me ; splendour-proof

I keep the broods of stars aloof :

For I intend to get to God,

For 'tis to God I speed so fast,

For in God's breast, my own abode.

Those shoals of dazzling glory, past.

I lay my spirit down at last.

I lie, where I have always lain,

God smiles as He has always smiled ;

Ere suns and moons could wax and
wane,

Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled

The heavens, God thought on me His
child ;

Ordained a life for me, arrayed

Its circumstances, every one

To the minutest ; ay, God said

This head this hand should rest upon

Thus, ere He fashioned star or sun.

And having thus created me,

Thus rooted me, He bade me grow,

Guiltless for ever, like a tree

That buds and blooms, nor seeks to
know

The law by which it prospers so :

But sure that thought and word and
deed

All go to swell His love for me,

Me, made because that love had need

Of something irrevocably

Pledged solely its content to be.

Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,

No poison-gourd foredoomed to
stoop !

I have God's warrant, could I blend

All hideous sins, as in a cup,

To drink the mingled venoms up,

Secure my nature will convert

The draught to blossoming gladness
fast,

While sweet dew turns to the gourd's
hurt,

And bloat, and while they bloat it,
blast,

As from the first its lot was cast.

For as I lie, smiled on, full fed

By unexhausted power to bless,

I gaze below on Hell's fierce bed,

And those its waves of flame oppress,

Swarming in ghastly wretchedness ;

Whose life on earth aspired to be

One altar-smoke, so pure !—to win

If not love like God's love to me,

At least to keep His anger in ;

And all their striving turned to sin.

Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown
white

With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,

The martyr, the wan acolyte,

The incense-swinging child,—undone

Before God fashioned star or sun !

God, whom I praise ; how could I
praise,

If such as I might understand,

Make out and reckon on His ways,

And bargain for His love, and stand,

Paying a price, at His right hand ?

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORI-
BUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYS-
BRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT
JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY.
CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH
OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOOK-TIDE
AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM,
Jessides.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from
the burning of Jacques du Bourg-
Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314 ; as dis-

torted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

I

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET
THE Lord, we look to once for all,
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:

He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,

Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.

See Him no other than as He is!

Give both the Infinitudes their due—

Infinite mercy, but, I wis,

As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ: plagal-cadence.*]

As infinite a justice too.

II

ONE SINGETH

John, Master of the Temple of God,

Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,

What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,

He sold it to Sultan Saladin:

Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,

Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,

And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm him who singeth—*]

We bring John now to be burned alive.

III

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;

'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;

But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,

Make a trench all round with the city muck

Inside they pile log upon log, good store;

Faggots not few, blocks great and small,

Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—

For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV

Good sappy bavins that kindle forth-with;

Billets that blaze substantial and slow;

Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;

Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:

Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,

Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,

Spit in his face, then leap back safe,

Sing 'Laudes' and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the torch.

V

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,

Is burning alive in Paris square!

How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?

Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?

Or heave his chest, while a band goes round?

Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?

Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?

—Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself.*]

VI

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,

Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.

(*Salvo reverentiâ.*)

Now it was, 'Saviour, bountiful lamb,

I have roasted Thee Turks, though men roast me.

See Thy servant, the plight wherein I am!

Art Thou a Saviour? Save Thou me!

CHORUS

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save
Thou me !

VII

Who maketh God's menace an idle
word ?

—Saith, it no more means what it
proclaims,
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton
bird ?—

For she too prattles of ugly names.
—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—
what he knows ?

That God is good and the rest is
breath ;
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's
rose ?

Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he
saith !

VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John !
Some, honied of taste like your
leman's tongue :

Some, bitter—for why ? (roast gaily
on !)

Their tree struck root in devil's
dung !

When Paul once reasoned of righteous-
ness

And of temperance and of judgment
to come,

Good Felix trembled, he could no less—
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked
thumb.

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked
thumb ?

IX

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart !
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays un-
close ;

Anther on anther, sharp spikes
outstart ;
And with blood for dew, the bosom
boils ;

And a gust of sulphur is all its smell ;
And lo, he is horribly in the toils

Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell !

CHORUS

What maketh Heaven, That maketh
Hell.

X

So, as John called now, through the fire
again,

On the Name, he had cursed with, all
his life—

To the Person, he bought and sold
again—

For the Face, with his daily buffets
rife—

Feature by feature It took its place !
And his voice, like a mad dog's
choking bark,

At the steady Whole of the Judge's
Face—

Died. Forth John's soul flared into
the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET
God help all poor souls lost in the
dark !

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO
ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN
SERMON IN ROME.

[' Now was come about Holy-Cross
Day, and now must my lord preach his
first sermon to the Jews : as it was of
old cared for in the merciful bowels
of the Church, that, so to speak, a
crumb at least from her conspicuous
table here in Rome, should be, though
but once yearly, cast to the famishing
dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-
upon beneath the feet of the guests.
And a moving sight in truth, this, of
so many of the besotted, blind, restive
and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now
maternally brought—nay, (for He saith,
" Compel them to come in ") haled, as
it were, by the head and hair, and
against their obstinate hearts, to par-
take of the heavenly grace. What
awakening, what striving with tears,
what working of a yeasty conscience !
Nor was my lord wanting to himself on
so apt an occasion ; witness the abun-
dant conversions which did incon-
tinent reward him : though not to

my lord be altogether the glory.'—
Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.]

Though what the Jews really said, on
thus being driven to church, was rather
to this effect :—

I

FEE, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the
week.

Rumble and tumble, slee't and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's
duo chime

(Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-
time.

II

Boh, here's Barnabas ! Job, that's
you ?

Up stumps Solomon—bustling too ?
Shame, man ! greedy beyond your
years

To handsel the bishop's shaving-
shears ?

Fair play's a jewel ! leave friends in
the lurch ?

Stand on a line ere you start for the
church.

III

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.

Hist ! square shoulders, settle your
thumbs

And buzz for the bishop—here he
comes.

IV

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog !
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.

What, a boy at his side, with the bloom
of a lass,

To help and handle my lord's hour-
glass !

Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?

His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed
swine.

V

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the
paunch !

Look at the purse with the tassel and
knob,

And the gown with the angel and
thingumbob.

What's he at, quotha ? reading his
text !

Now you've his curtsey—and what
comes next ?

VI

See to our converts—you doomed black
dozen—

No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen !
You five that were thieves, deserve it
fairly ;

You seven that were beggars, will live
less sparely ;

You took your turn and dipped in the
hat,

Got fortune—and fortune gets you ;
mind that !

VII

Give your first groan—compunction's
at work ;

And soft ! from a Jew you mount to a
Turk.

Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on
chin

He was four times already converted
in !

Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign
of grace—

Or he ruins us all with his hanging-
face.

VIII

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at ?
I know a point where his text falls pat.

I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just
now

Went to my heart and made me vow

I meddle no more with the worst of
trades—

Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX

Groan all together now, whee—hee—
hee !

It's a work, it's a-work, ah, woe is
me !

It began, when a herd of us, picked and
placed,

Were spurred through the Corso,
stripped to the waist ;

Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well
spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X

It grew, when the hangman entered our
bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like
hounds.

It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse, would throttle
my creed.

And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins, help me to
their God.

XI

But now, while the scapegoats leave
our flock.

And the rest sit silent and count the
clock,

Since forced to muse the appointed
time

On these precious facts and truths
sublime,—

Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, 'This world has been harsh
and strange;

Something is wrong: there needeth a
change.

But what, or where? at the last, or
first?

In one point only we sinned, at worst.

XIII

'The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to
them:

To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles
cleave.

So the Prophet saith and his sons
believe.

XIV

'Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their
place:

In the land of the Lord shall lead the
same,

Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall
blame,

When the slaves enslave, the oppressed
ones o'er

The oppressor triumph for evermore?

XV

'God spoke, and gave us the word to
keep:

Bade never fold the hands nor sleep

'Mid a faithless world,—at watch and
ward,

Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By His servant Moses the watch was
set:

Though near upon cock-crow, we keep
it yet.

XVI

'Thou! if Thou wast He, who at mid-
watch came,

By the starlight, naming a dubious
Name!

And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on Thee coming to take Thine
own,

And we gave the Cross, when we owed
the Throne—

XVII

'Thou art the Judge. We are bruised
thus.

But, the judgment over, join sides
with us!

Thine too is the cause! and not more
Thine

Than ours, is the work of these dogs and
swine,

Whose life laughs through and spits at
their creed,

Who maintain Thee in word, and defy
Thee in deed!

XVIII

'We withstood Christ then? be mindful
how

At least we withstand Barabbas now!

Was our outrage sore? but the worst
we spared,

To have called these—Christians, had
we dared!

Let defiance to them pay mistrust of
Thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary !

XIX

'By the torture, prolonged from age to
age,
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's
disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's
place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellow-
ship,—

XX

'We boast our proof that at least the
Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the
Devil's crew.
Thy face took never so deep a shade
But we fought them in it, God our aid !
A trophy to bear, as we march, Thy
band
South, East, and on to the Pleasant
Land !'

[*The present Pope abolished this bad
business of the sermon.*—R. B.]

PROTUS

AMONG these latter busts we count by
scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-
thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the
breast,—
One loves a baby face, with violets
there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could
bear.

Now read here. 'Protus ends a period
Of empery beginning with a god ;
Born in the porphyry chamber at
Byzant,
Queens by his cradle, proud and minis-
trant :
And if he quickened breath there,
'twould like fire
Pantingly through the dim vast realm
transpire.

A fame that he was missing, spread
afar—

The world, from its four corners, rose
in war,

Till he was borne out on a balcony
To pacify the world when it should see.
The captains ranged before him, one,
his hand

Made baby points at, gained the chief
command.

And day by day more beautiful he
grew

In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
While young Greek sculptors gazing on
the child

Became, with old Greek sculpture,
reconciled.

Already sages laboured to condense

In easy tomes a life's experience :

And artists took grave counsel to
impart

In one breath and one hand-sweep, all
their art—

To make his graces prompt as blossom-
ing

Of plentifully-watered palms in spring :
Since well beseems it, whose mounts
the throne,

For beauty, knowledge, strength, should
stand alone,

And mortals love the letters of his
name.'

—Stop ! Have you turned two pages ?
Still the same.

New reign, same date. The scribe goes
on to say

How that same year, on such a month
and day,

'John the Pannonian, groundedly
believed

A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard
hand reprieved

The Empire from its fate the year
before,—

Came, had a mind to take the crown,
and wore

The same for six years, (during which
the Huns

Kept off their fingers from us) till his
sons

Put something in his liquor'—and so
forth.

Then a new reign. Stay—'Take at its
just worth'

(Subjoins an annotator) 'what I give
As hearsay. Some think, John let
Protus live

And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached
man's age

At some blind northern court; made,
first a page,

Then, tutor to the children; last, of use
About the hunting-stables. I deduce
He wrote the little tract "On worming
dogs,"

Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
Is extant yet. A Protus of the race
Is rumoured to have died a monk in
Thrace,—

And if the same, he reached senility.'

Here's John the Smith's rough-
hammered head. Great eye
Gross jaw and griped lips do what
granite can

To give you the crown-grasper. What
a man!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

THERE's a palace in Florence, the
world knows well,

And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen
tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, 'Whorides by with the royal air?'

The brides-maids' prattle around her
ceased;

She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride
increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, 'The Great-Duke Ferdin-
and.'

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—'Who is
she?'

—'A Bride the Riccardi brings home
to-day.'

Hair in heaps lay heavily

Over a pale brow spirit-pure—

Carved like the heart of the coal-black
tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and
wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes,—
The Past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their
sakes,

A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow
makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the Palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God
requite! *ἄνθρωπος*)

To Florence and God the wrong was
done,

Through the first republic's murder
there

By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the
square)

Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal
pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man
subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss con-
ferred,

As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not
think,

Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's
brink

He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed-chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut
on her

Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the
East

She could watch like a convent's
chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a
feast,

And a feast might lead to so much
beside,

He, of many evils, chose the least.

'Freely I choose too,' said the bride—

'Your window and its world suffice,'
Replied the tongue, while the heart
replied—

'If I spend the night with that devil
twice,

May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on Para-
dise !

'I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
And I save my soul—but not to-
morrow'—

(She checked herself and her eye grew
dim)—

'My father tarries to bless my state :
I must keep it one day more for him.

'Is one day more so long to wait ?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know ;
We shall see each other, sure as fate.'

She turned on her side and slept. Just
so !

So we resolve on a thing and sleep :
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, 'Dear or
cheap

As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep.'

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on
call,

As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled ' 'Twas a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours.—
A shame to efface, whate'er befall !

'What if we break from the Arno
bowers,

And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night's fault with this morn-
ing's flowers ?'

The bridegroom, not a thought to be
seen

On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, 'Too much favour for me so mean !

'But, alas ! my lady leaves the South ;
Each wind that comes from the Apen-
nine

Is a menace to her tender youth :

'Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
'To avert the flower of life's decline.'

Quoth the Duke, 'A sage and a kindly
fear.

Moreover Petraja is cold this spring :
Be our feast to-night as usual here !'

And then to himself—'Which night
shall bring
Thy bride to her lover's embraces,
fool—

Or I am the fool, and thou art the king !

'Yet my passion must wait a night, nor
cool—

For to-night the Envoy arrives from
France,

Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my
tool.

'I need thee still and might miss per-
chance.

To-day is not wholly lost, beside.
With its hope of my lady's counten-
ance :

'For I ride—what should I do but ride ?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window—well betide !'

So said, so done : nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent
brow,

Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit
kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them
now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day
more

Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth—
The rose would blow when the storm
passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's
dearth

By winter's fruits that supplant the
rose :

The world and its ways have a certain
worth !

And to press a point while these oppose
Were a simple policy ; better wait :
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's
fate,

Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the
grate !

And she—she watched the square like
a book

Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find, she undertook :

When the picture was reached the book
was done,

And she turned from the picture at
night to scheme

Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years—gleam
by gleam

The glory dropped from their youth and
love,

And both perceived they had dreamed
a dream ;

Which hovered as dreams do, still
above,—

But who can take a dream for a truth ?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next re-
move !

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that
streaked

Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's
tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin ^{so}
peaked,—

And wondered who the woman was, ^{old age}
Hollow-eyed and haggard-checked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—

'Summon her,' she suddenly said,
'Before the rest of my old self pass,

'Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who fashions the clay no love will
change,

And fixes a beauty never to fade.

'Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.

'Make me a face on the window there,
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square !

'And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle,

'To say, "What matters it at the end ?
I did no more while my heart was warm
Than does that image, my pale-faced
friend."

'Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the
brow,

And the blood that blues the inside
arm—

'Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine ?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow.'

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine
With flowers and fruits which leaves
enlace,

Was set where now is the empty shrine—
(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of
sky,

The passionate pale lady's face—

Eying ever with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless
stretch,

Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch

In Florence, 'Youth—my dream escapes!

Will its record stay?' And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
'Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

'John of Douay shall effect my plan,
Set me on horseback here aloft,
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

'In the very square I have crossed so oft!

That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

'While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze—

Admire and say, "When he was alive,
How he would take his pleasure once!"

'And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen the while and laugh in my tomb

At idleness which aspires to strive.

So! while these wait the trump of doom,

How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder

What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of His,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.

I hear you reproach, But delay was best,

For their end was a crime.—Oh, a crime will do

As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself

And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?

Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram

To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham: *competition.*

As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,

Venture as truly, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my principle.

Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:

And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.

You of the virtue, (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

This applies to

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

The rain set early in to-night,

The sullen wind was soon awake,

It tore the elm-tops down for spite,

And did its worst to vex the lake,

I listened with heart fit to break.

When glided in Porphyria; straight

She shut the cold out and the storm.

And kneeled and made the cheerless grate

Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;

Which done, she rose, and from her form

Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,

And laid her soiled gloves by, untied

Her hat and let the damp hair fall,

And, last, she sat down by my side

And called me. When no voice replied,

She put my arm about her waist,

And made her smooth white shoulder bare,

And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie
there,

And spread o'er all her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she

Too weak, for all her heart's en-
deavour,

To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dis sever.
And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast re-
strain

A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain;
So, she was come through wind and
rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it
grew

While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine,
fair,

Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair

In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around.
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids; again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress

About her neck; her cheek once
more

Blushed bright beneath my burning
kiss:

I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:

The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,

That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!

Porphyria's love: she guessed not
how

Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not
stirred,

And yet God has not said a word!

'CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME'

(See Edgar's song in 'LEAR')

I

My first thought was, he lied in every
word,

That hoary cripple, with malicious
eye

Askance to watch the working of his
lie

On mine, and mouth scarce able to
afford

Suppression of the glee that pursed and
scored

Its edge at one more victim gained
thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his
staff?

What, save to waylay with his lies,
ensnare

All travellers that might find him
posted there,

And ask the road? I guessed what
skull-like laugh

Would break, what crutch 'gin write
my epitaph

For pastime in the dusty thorough-
fare,

III

It at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all
agree,

Hides the Dark Tower. Yet ac-
quiescingly

I did turn as he pointed; neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end
might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide
wandering,

What with my search drawn out thro'
years, my hope

Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success

would bring,—

I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its
scope.

V

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin
and end
The tears and takes the farewell of
each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw
breath
Freelier outside, ('since all is o'er,' he
saith,
'And the blow fallen no grieving can
amend;')

VI

While some discuss if near the other
graves
Be room enough for this, and when
a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse
away,
With care about the banners, scarves
and staves,—
And still the man hears all, and only
craves
He may not shame such tender love
and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this
quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been
writ
So many times among 'The Band'—
to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's
search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they,
seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should
I be fit.

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his high-
way
Into the path he pointed. All the
day
Had been a dreary one at best, and
dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one
grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its
estrays.

IX

For mark! no sooner was I fairly
found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or
two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a
last view
To the safe road, 'twas gone; grey
plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's
bound.
I might go on; nought else remained
to do.

X

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing
throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar
grove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their
law
Might propagate their kind, with none
to awe,
You'd think; a burr had been a
treasure-trove.

XI

No! penury, inertness and grimace.
In some strange sort, were the land's
portion. 'See
Or shut your eyes,' said Nature
peevishly,
'It nothing skills: I cannot help my
case:
'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must
cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners
free.'

XII

If there pushed any ragged thistle-
stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped
—the bents
Were jealous else. What made those
holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves—
bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute
must walk
Pushing their life out, with a brute's
intent.

XIII

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked
 the mud
 Which underneath looked kneaded
 up with blood.
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone
 a-stare,
 Stood stupified, however he came there:
 Thrust out past service from the
 devil's stud!

XIV

Alive? he might be dead for aught I
 know,
 With that red, gaunt and colloped
 neck a-strain,
 And shut eyes underneath the rusty
 mane;
 Seldom went such grotesqueness with
 such woe;
 I never saw a brute I hated so;
 He must be wicked to deserve such
 pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my
 heart.
 As a man calls for wine before he
 fights,
 I asked one draught of earlier,
 happier sights,
 Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
 Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's
 art:
 One taste of the old time sets all to
 rights!

XVI

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening
 face
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
 An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
 That way he used. Alas, one night's
 disgrace!
 Out went my heart's new fire and left
 it cold.

XVII

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there
 he stands
 Frank as ten years ago when knighted
 first.
 What honest men should dare (he
 said) he durst.

Good—but the scene shifts—faugh!
 what hangman's hands
 Pin to his breast a parchment? his
 own bands
 Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and
 curst!

XVIII

Better this Present than a Past like
 that;
 Back therefore to my darkening path
 again.
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could
 strain.
 Will the night send a howlet or a
 bat?
 I asked: when something on the dismal
 flat
 Came to arrest my thoughts and
 change their train.

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
 As unexpected as a serpent comes.
 No sluggish tide congenial to the
 glooms—
 This, as it frothed by, might have been
 a bath
 For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the
 wrath
 Of its black eddy bespate with flakes
 and spumes.

XX

So petty yet so spiteful! all along,
 Low scrubby alders kneeled down
 over it;
 Drenched willows flung them head-
 long in a fit
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
 The river which had done them all the
 wrong,
 Whate'er that was, rolled by, de-
 terred no whit.

XXI

Which, while I forded,—good saints,
 how I feared
 To set my foot upon a dead man's
 cheek,
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust
 to seek

For hollows, tangled in his hair or
beard!
—It may have been a water-rat I
speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's
shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other
bank.
Now for a better country. Vain
presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war
did they wage
Whose savage trample thus could pad
the dank
Soil to a plash? toads in a poisoned
tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that
fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the
plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid
mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to
work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-
slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians
against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that—a furlong on—
why, there!
What bad use was that engine for,
that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit
to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the
air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth
of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground,
once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and
now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool
finds mirth,

Makes a thing and then mars it, till his
mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a
rood—
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark
black dearth.

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay
and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of
the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like
boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in
him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its
rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it
recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end!
Nought in the distance but the even-
ing, nought
To point my foot-step further! At
the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-
friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing
dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the
guide I sought.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow
grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had
given place.
All round to mountains—with such
name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen
in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—
solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer
case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognise some
trick
Of mischief happened to me, God
knows when—
In a bad dream perhaps. Here
ended, then,

Progress this way. When, in the very
 nick
 Of giving up, one time more, came a
 click
 As when a trap shuts—you're inside
 the den!

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
 This was the place! those two hills
 on the right,
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn
 in horn in fight;
 While to the left, a tall scalped moun-
 tain . . . Dunce,
 Fool, to be dozing at the very nonce,
 After a life spent training for the
 sight!

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower
 itself?
 The round squat turret, blind as the
 fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a
 counterpart
 In the whole world. The tempest's
 mocking elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen
 shelf
 He strikes on, only when the timbers
 start.

XXXII

Not see? because of night perhaps?—
 Why, day
 Came back again for that! before it left,
 The dying sunset kindled through a
 cleft:
 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
 'Now stab and end the creature—to
 the heft!'

XXXIII

Not hear? when noise was everywhere!
 it tolled
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
 How such a one was strong, and such
 was bold,
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old
 Lost, lost! one moment knelled the
 woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-
 sides, met
 To view the last of me, a living frame
 For one more picture! in a sheet of
 flame
 I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
 Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
 And blew. '*Childe Roland to the
 Dark Tower came.*'

MEN, AND WOMEN

'TRANSCENDENTALISM'

A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS

STOP playing, poet! may a brother
 speak?
 'Tis you speak, that's your error.
 Song's our art:
 Whereas you please to speak these
 naked thoughts
 Instead of draping them in sights and
 sounds.
 —True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts
 fit to treasure up!
 But why such long prolusion and dis-
 play,

Such turning and adjustment of the
 harp,
 And taking it upon your breast, at
 length,
 Only to speak dry words across its
 strings?
 Stark-naked thought is in request
 enough:
 Speak prose and hollo it till Europe
 hears!
 The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about
 with bark,
 Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp
 to Alp—
 Exchange our harp for that,—who
 hinders you?

But here's your fault; grown men
want thought, you think;
Thought's what they mean by verse,
and seek in verse:
Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason—so, you aim at
men.
Quite otherwise! Objects throng our
youth, 'tis true;
We see and hear and do not wonder
much:
If you could tell us what they mean,
indeed!
As Swedish Boehme never cared for
plants
Until it happened, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could
speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to
talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
Colloquised with the cowslip on such
themes!
We find them extant yet in Jacob's
prose.

But by the time youth slips a stage or
two
While reading prose in that tough book
he wrote,
(Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our
mind)
We shut the clasps and find life's
summer past.
Then, who helps more, pray, to repair
our loss—
Another Boehme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses
say,—
Or some stout Mage like him of Halber-
stadt,
John, who made things Boehme wrote
thoughts about?
He with a 'look you!' vents a brace of
rhymes,
And in there breaks the sudden rose
herself,
Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the
chairs
And musty volumes, Boehme's book
and all,—

Buries us with a glory, young once
more,
Pouring Heaven into this shut house of
life.

So come, the harp back to your heart
again!
You are a poem, though your poem's
naught.
The best of all you did before, believe,
Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer
chords
Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-
moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEM- PORARY

I ONLY knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his
way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you
saw.

His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though
none did:

The cloak, that somewhat shone and
showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement
with his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in
face,

An old dog, bald and blindish, at his
heels.

They turned up, now, the alley by the
church,
That leads no whither; now, they
breathed themselves

On the main promenade just at the
wrong time:

You'd come upon his scrutinizing hat,
Making a peaked shade blacker than
itself

Against the single window spared some
house

Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish
work,—

Or else surprise the ferule of his stick

Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the
chinks

Of some new shop a-building, French
and fine.

He stood and watched the cobbler at
his trade,

The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brasier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its
winch.

He glanced o'er books on stalls with
half an eye,

And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's
string,

And broad-edge bold-print posters by
the wall.

He took such cognisance of men and
things,

If any beat a horse, you felt he saw ;
If any cursed a woman, he took note ;

Yet stared at nobody,—they stared at
him,

And found, less to their pleasure than
surprise,

He seemed to know them and expect as
much.

So, next time that a neighbour's tongue
was loosed,

It marked the shameful and notorious
fact,

We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,

The town's true master if the town but
knew !

We merely kept a Governor for form,
While this man walked about and took
account

Of all thought, said and acted, then
went home,

And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, He

knows why,

And reads them in His bed-room of a
night.

Oh, you might smile ! there wanted not
a touch,

A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly
case

As back into your mind the man's look
came—

Stricken in years a little,—such a brow
His eyes had to live under !—clear as
flint

On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's
claw.

Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate ?
When altogether old B. disappeared

And young C. got his mistress,—was 't
our friend,

His letter to the King, that did it all ?
What paid the bloodless man for so
much pains ?

Our Lord the King has favourites mani-
fold,

And shifts His ministry some once a
month ;

Our city gets new Governors at whiles,—
But never word or sign, that I could

hear,

Notified to this man about the streets
The King's approval of those letters

conned

The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office ? frowned

our Lord,

Exhorting when none heard—' Be-
seech Me not !

Too far above My people,—beneath
Me !

I set the watch,—how should the people
know ?

Forget them, keep Me all the more in
mind !'

Was some such understanding 'twixt
the Two ?

I found no truth in one report at
least—

That if you tracked him to his home,
down lanes

Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
You found he ate his supper in a room

Blazing with lights, four Titians on the
wall,

And twenty naked girls to change his
plate !

Poor man, he lived another kind of life
In that new, stuccoed, third house by

the bridge,
Fresh-painted, rather smart than other-
wise !

The whole street might o'erlook him as
he sat,

Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's
back,

Playing a decent cribbage with his
maid
(Jacynth, you're sure her name was)
o'er the cheese
And fruit, three red halves of starved
winter-pears,
Or treat of radishes in April ! nine,
Ten, struck the church clock, straight
to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he
was,
Would point him out to me a dozen
times ;
' St—St,' he'd whisper, ' the Cor-
rigidor ! '
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lus-
trous belt,
And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed
the news,
Announced the bull-fights, gave each
church its turn,
And memorized the miracle in vogue !
He had a great observance from us
boys ;
We were in error ; that was not the
man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been
afraid,
To have just looked, when this man
came to die,
And seen who lined the clean gay
garret's sides
And stood about the neat low truckle-
bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving
guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-
chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's
life and death,
Doing the King's work all the dim day
long,
In his old coat and up to his knees in
mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a
crust,—
And, now the day was won, relieved at
once !
No further show or need for that old
coat,

You are sure, for one thing ! Bless us,
all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you
and I !
A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse,—
could you ?
Let's to the Prado and make the most
of time.

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES

I AM a Goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, sur-
passed
By none whose temples whiten this the
world.
Through Heaven I roll my lucid moon
along ;
I shed in Hell o'er my pale people
peace ;
On Earth I, caring for the creatures,
guard
Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-
bitch sleek,
And every feathered mother's callow
brood,
And all that love green haunts and
loneliness.
Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging
crowns
Of poppies red to blackness, bell and
stem,
Upon my image at Athenai here ;
And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends
above,
Was dearest to me. He, my buskined
step
To follow through the wild-wood leafy
ways,
And chase the panting stag, or swift
with darts
Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard
low,
Neglected homage to another God :
Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight
smoke
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy dispatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee
stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for
himself

The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.

Hippolotos exclaiming in his rage
Against the fury of the Queen, she judged

Life insupportable; and, pricked at heart

An Amazonian stranger's race should dare

To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord:

Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve.

And Theseus read, returning, and believed,

And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,

The man without a crime who, last as first,

Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained

That of his wishes should be granted
Three,

And one he imprecated straight—alive
May ne'er Hippolotos reach other lands!

Poseidon heard, ai ai! And scarce the prince

Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car

That give the feet a stay against the strength

Of the Henetian horses, and around

His body flung the reins, and urged their speed

Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,

When from the gaping wave a monster flung

His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled

Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him

That reared them; and the master-chariot-pole

Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,

Hippolotos, whose feet were trameled fast,

Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein

Which either hand directed; nor they quenched

The frenzy of their flight before each trace,

Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,

Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell,

Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands

On that detested beach, was bright with blood

And morsels of his flesh: then fell the steeds

Head-foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,

Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.

His people, who had witnessed all afar,
Bore back the ruins of Hippolotos.

But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced

(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,

I, in a flood of glory visible,
Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed

By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.

Then Theseus lay the woefullest of men,
And worthily; but ere the death veils hid

His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed

To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.

So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake

Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life;

Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
Should dress my image with some faded poor

Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object

Such slackness to my worshippers who turn

The trusting heart and loaded hand elsewhere,

As they had climbed Olumpos to report
Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—

I interposed : and, this eventful night,
 While round the funeral pyre the
 populace
 Stood with fierce light on their black
 robes to blind
 Each sobbing head, while yet their hair
 they clipped
 O'er the dead body of their withered
 prince,
 And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
 On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the
 slab
 'Twas bruised on, groaned away 'the
 heavy grief—
 As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs
 crashed
 Sending a crowd of sparkles through the
 night,
 And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
 Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted
 jars
 Of wine, dissolving oils and frankin-
 cense,
 And splendid gums like gold,—my
 potency
 Conveyed the perished man to my
 retreat
 In the thrice-venerable forest here.
 And this white-bearded sage who
 squeezes now
 The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of
 fame,
 Asclepios, whom my radiant brother
 taught
 The doctrine of each herb and flower
 and root,
 To know their secret'st virtue and
 express
 The saving soul of all : who so has
 soothed
 With lavers the torn brow and murdered
 cheeks,
 Composed the hair and brought its gloss
 again,
 And called the red bloom to the pale
 skin back,
 And laid the strips and jagged ends of
 flesh
 Even once more, and slacked the sinew's
 knot
 Of every tortured limb—that now he lies
 As if mere sleep possessed him under-
 neath

These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh,
 cheer,
 Divine presenter of the healing rod,
 Thy snake, with ardent throat and
 lulling eye,
 Twines his lithe spires around ! I say,
 much cheer !
 Proceed thou with thy wisest phar-
 macies !
 And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-
 nymphs,
 Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and
 leaves
 That strew the turf around the twain !
 While I
 Await, in fitting silence, the event.

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL
 EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE
 ARAB PHYSICIAN

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's
 crumbs,
 The not-incurious in God's handiwork
 (This man's-flesh He hath admirably
 made,
 Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a
 paste,
 To coop up and keep down on earth a
 space
 That puff of vapour from His mouth,
 man's soul)
 —To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
 Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
 Like me inquisitive how pricks and
 cracks
 Befall the flesh through too much stress
 and strain,
 Whereby the wily vapour fain would
 slip
 Back and rejoin its source before the
 term,—
 And artest in contrivance, under God,
 To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
 The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at
 home
 Sends greeting (health and knowledge,
 fame with peace)
 Three samples of true snake-stone—
 rarer still,
 One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,

(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms
than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second
time.

My journeyings were brought to
Jericho :

Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid ?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and
bone

On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hither-
ward :

Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his
son.

A black lynx snarled and pricked a
tufted ear ;

Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow
balls :

I cried and threw my staff and he was
gone.

Twice have the robbers stripped and
beaten me,

And once a town declared me for a spy,
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the
night,

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance
thence

A man with plague-sores at the third
degree

Runs till he drops down dead. Thou
laughest here !

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and
safe,

To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry
yields.

A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of : there's a
spider here

Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of
tombs,

Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey
back ;

Take five and drop them . . . but who
knows his mind,

The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?
His service payeth me a sublimate

Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
'There set in order my experiences.

Gather what most deserves, and give
thee all—

Or I might add, Judaea's gum-traga-
canth

Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-
grained,

Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the por-
phyry,

In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-
disease

Confounds me, crossing so with lep-
rosy—

Thou hadst admired one sort I gained
at Zoar—

But zeal outruns discretion. Here I
end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh grate-
fully,

Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not,
though he steal ?

I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.

An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang
For, be it this town's barrenness—or
else

The Man had something in the look of
him—

His case has struck me far more than
'tis worth.

So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand

The care and pains this somehow stole
from me)

I bid thee take the thing while fresh in
mind,

Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the
truth ?

The very man is gone from me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of dis-
course.

Thus then, and let thy better wit help
all.

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point

Of trance prolonged unduly some three
days,

When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art

Unknown to me and which 'twere well
to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body
indeed,—
But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too
wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might
inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing
subsequent
Attaineth to crase those fancy-scrawls
The just-returned and new-established
soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by
heart
That henceforth she will read or these
or none.
And first—the man's own firm conviction
rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried
him)
—That he was dead and then restored
to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe :
—'Sayeth, the same bade 'Rise,' and
he did rise.
'Such cases are diurnal,' thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment!—not, that such a
fume,
Instead of giving way to time and
health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones
and all!
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age.
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common
health
As he were made and put aside to
show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried
flesh,
And bring it clear and fair, by three
days' sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that
brightens all?

This grown man eyes the world now
like a child.
Some elders of his tribe, I should pre-
mise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they
spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told
the case,—
He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them
talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and
yet no fool.
And that's a sample how his years
must go.
Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure, can he use the
same
With straitened habits and with tastes
starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished
brain
The sudden element that changes
things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at
his hand,
And puts the cheap old joy in the
scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to
mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue
times?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
The man's fantastic will is the man's
law.
So here—we'll call the treasure know-
ledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on
earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while
seeing Heaven.
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious arma-
ments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with
gourds—

'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
 Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze rapt
 With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see)—as if in that indeed
 He caught prodigious import, whole results;
 And so will turn to us the bystanders
 In ever the same stupor (note this point)
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.
 Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
 Or pretermission of his daily craft—
 While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
 Exasperation, just as like! demand
 The reason why—'tis but a word,' object—
 'A gesture'—he regards thee as our lord
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us, dost thou mind?—when being young
 We both would unadvisedly recite
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
 (It is the life to lead perforceably)
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,

Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
 The spiritual life around the earthly life!
 The law of that is known to him as this—
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
 So is the man perplexed with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong across,
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
 'It should be' balked by 'here it cannot be'
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him 'Rise' and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick of the blood within
 Admonishes—then back he sinks at once
 To ashes, that was very fire before,
 In scdulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 Professedly the faultier that he knows
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the Heavenly will—
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
 For that same death which must restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth:
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God please.
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
 Hence I perceive not he affects to preach

The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do :

How can he give his neighbour the real ground,

His own conviction ? ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old

'Be it as God please' reassures him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should—

'How, beast,' said I, 'this stolid carelessness

Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march

To stamp out like a little spark thy town,

Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once ?

He merely looked with his large eyes on me.

The man is apathetic, you deduce ?
Contrariwise he loves both old and young,

Able and weak—affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I ? flowers of the field—

As a wise workman recognises tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.

Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :
Only impatient, let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed :

As when in certain travels I have feigned

To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners

Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,

Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace !

Thou wilt object—why have I not ere this

Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene

Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,

Conferring with the frankness that befits ?

Alas ! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a tumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,

Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.

His death which happened when the earthquake fell

(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont—

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—

How could he stop the earthquake ?
That's their way !

The other imputations must be lies :
But take one—though I loathe to give it thee,

In mere respect to any good man's fame !

(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad ; should we count on what he says ?

Perhaps not : though in writing to a leech

'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)

This man so cured regards the curer then,

As—God forgive me—who but God himself,

Creator and Sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile !

—'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,

Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,

Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,

And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,

And must have so avouched himself, in fact,

In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?

Why write of trivial matters, things of price
 Calling at every moment for remark ?
 I noticed on the margin of a pool
 Blue-flowering horage, the Aleppo sort.
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem

Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth :
 Nor I myself discern in what is writ
 Good cause for the peculiar interest
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.

Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus :

I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills

Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there came

A moon made like a face with certain spots

Multiform, manifold and menacing :
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met

In this old sleepy town at unaware,
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.

Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
 To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose.
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine ;

Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?

So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—

So, through the thunder comes a human voice

Saying, ' O heart I made, a heart beats here !

Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.

Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of Mine,

But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,

And thou must love Me who have died for thee !

The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

PICTOR IGNOTUS

[FLORENCE, 15—]

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's

Ye praise so. How my soul springs up ! No bar

Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes !

—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,

To outburst on your night with all my gift

Of fires from God : nor would my flesh have shrunk

From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift

And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk

To the centre, of an instant ; or around
 Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan

The licence and the limit, space and bound,

Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.

And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,

Over the canvas could my hand have flung,

Each face obedient to its passion's law,
 Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue ;

Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,

A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
 Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood

Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place ;

Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
 And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—

O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup ?
 What did ye give me that I have not saved ?

Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
 What 's done is done, and she is dead
 beside,
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
 And as she died so must we die our-
 selves,
 And thence ye may perceive the world 's
 a dream.
 Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
 Hours and long hours in the dead night,
 I ask
 ' Do I live, am I dead ? ' Peace, peace
 seems all.
 Saint Praxed's ever was the church for
 peace ;
 And so, about this tomb of mine. I
 fought
 With tooth and nail to save my niche,
 ye know :
 —Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my
 care ;
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the
 corner South
 He graced his carrion with, God curse
 the same !
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but
 thence
 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
 And somewhat of the choir, those silent
 seats,
 And up into the aery dome where live
 The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk :
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
 With those nine columns round me.
 two and two,
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm
 stands :—
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the
 ripe
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty
 pulse
 —Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-
 stone,
 Put me where I may look at him !
 True peach,
 Rosy and flawless : how I earned the
 prize !
 Draw close : that conflagration of my
 church
 —What then ? So much was saved if
 aught were missed !

My sons, ye would not be my death ?
 Go dig
 The white-grape vineyard where the
 oil-press stood,
 Drop water gently till the surface sinks,
 And if ye find . . . Ah, God I know not,
 I ! . . .
 Bedded in store of rotten figleaves soft,
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's
 breast . . .
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas,
 all,
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
 So, let the blue lump poise between my
 knees,
 Like God the Father's globe on both
 His hands
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and
 burst !
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our
 years :
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he ?
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons ?
 Black—
 'Twas ever antiqu-black I meant !
 How else
 Shall ye contrast my frieze to come
 beneath ?
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and
 perchance
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
 Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last
 garment off,
 And Moses with the tables . . . but I
 know
 Ye mark me not ! What do they
 whisper thee,
 Child of my bowels, Anselm ? Ah, ye
 hope
 To revel down my villas while I gasp
 Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy
 travertine
 Which Gandolf from his tomb-top
 chuckles at !
 Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper,
 then !

'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I
grieve
My bath must needs be left behind,
alas !
One block, pure green as a pistachio-
nut,
There 's plenty jasper somewhere in the
world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to
pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manu-
scripts,
And mistresses with great smooth
marbly limbs ?
—That 's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's
every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second
line—
Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his
need !
And then how I shall lie through
centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the
mass,
And see God made and eaten all day
long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and
taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-
smoke !
For as I lie here, hours of the dead
night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a
crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as
stone can point,
And let the bedclothes for a mortcloth
drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-
work :
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange
thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my
ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and
Priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the
mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking
eyes,

And new-found agate urns as fresh as
day,
And marble's language, Latin pure,
discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the
Pope
My villas : will ye ever eat my heart ?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my
soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished
frieze,
Pierce out its starved design, and fill my
vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a
Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus
down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask -
'Do I live, am I dead ?' There, leave
me, there !
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it !
Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares
which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing
through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world !
Well, go ! I bless ye. Fewertapers there,
But in a row : and, going, turn your
backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church
for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-
stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was !

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

No more wine ? then we'll push back
chairs and talk.
A final glass for me, though : cool, i'
faith !
We ought to have our Abbey back, you
see.

Church

It's different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his
heart!

I doubt if they're half baked, those
chalk rosettes, *more*
Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings every-
where;

It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln:
eh?

These hot long ceremonies of our church
Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,
You take me—amply pay it! Now,
we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you
know,
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
We'd see truth dawn together?—truth
that peeps

Over the glass's edge when dinner's done,
And body gets its sop and hold its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's
the time—

'Tis break of day! You do despise me
then.

And if I say, 'despise me,'—never
fear—

I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair for example:
here,

I well imagine you respect my place
(Status, *entourage*, worldly circum-
stance)

Quite to its value—very much indeed
—Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once—
You'll turn it to such capital account!
When somebody, through years and
years to come,

Hints of the bishop,—names me—
that's enough—

'Blougram? I knew him'—(into it you
slide)

'Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi
Day,

All alone, we two—he's a clever man—
And after dinner,—why, the wine you
know,—

Oh, there was wine, and good!—what
with the wine...

'Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!
He's no bad fellow, Blougram—he had
seen

Something of mine he relished—some
review—

He's quite above their humbug in his
heart,

Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's
his trade—

I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at
times—

How otherwise? I liked him, I con-
fess!

Che che, my dear sir, as we say at
Rome,

Don't you protest now! It's fair give
and take;

You have had your turn and spoken
your home-truths:

The hand's mine now, and here you
follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first
fact stays—

You do despise me; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's—you would not
be I—

You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte—or, bless me, lower
still,

Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you
preferred,

Spoke as you thought, and, as you
cannot help,

Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it
was,

You loosed your mind, were whole and
sole yourself.

—That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth
Never be based! for say they make me
Pope

(They can't—suppose it for our argu-
ment)

Why, there I'm at my tether's end—
I've reached

My height, and not a height which
pleases you.

An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It's like those *cerie* stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor played Death on a
stage

With pasteboard crown, sham orb and
tinsel'd dart,
And called himself the monarch of the
world,
Then, going in the tire-room afterward
Because the play was done, to shift
himself,

Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly
The moment he had shut the closet door
By Death himself. Thus God might
touch a Pope

At unawares, ask what his baubles
mean,

And whose part he presumed to play
just now ?

Best be yourself, imperial, plain and
true !

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find whatever more or
less

I boast of my ideal realized.

Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realize one jot.

I am much, you are nothing ; you
would be all,

I would be merely much—you beat me
there.

No, friend, you do not beat me,—hearken
why.

The common problem, yours, mine,
every one's,

Is not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it
fair

Up to our means—a very different
thing !

No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life's plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing
more,

May lead within a world which (by
your leave)

Is Rome or London—not Fool's-
paradise.

Embellish Rome, idealize away.

Make Paradise of London if you can,

You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile !

We mortals cross the ocean of this world
Each in his average cabin of a life—

The best's not big, the worst yields
elbow-room.

Now for our six months' voyage—how
prepare ?

You come on shipboard with a lands-
man's list

Of things he calls convenient—so they
are !

An India screen is pretty furniture,

A piano-forte is a fine resource,

All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,

The new edition fifty volumes long ;
And little Greek books, with the funny
type

They get up well at Leipsic, fill the
next—

Go on ! slabbed marble, what a bath it
makes !

And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us
add !

'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleet-
ing glow

Hang full in face of one where'er one
roams,

Since he more than the others brings
with him

Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese !
Yet 'twas not on your list before,

perhaps.

—Alas ! friend, here's the agent . . .
is't the name ?

The captain, or whoever's master
here—

You see him screw his face up ; what's
his cry

Ere you set foot on shipboard ? 'Six
feet square !'

If you won't understand what six feet
mean,

Compute and purchase stores accord-
ingly—

And if in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano and bath, you
come on board

Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landmen see you
off ;

Not afterwards, when, long ere half seas
over,

You peep up from your utterly naked
boards

Into some snug and well-appointed
berth,

Like mine, for instance (try the cooler
jug—
Put back the other, but don't jog the
ice)
And mortified you mutter 'Well and
good—
He sits enjoying his sea-furniture—
'Tis stout and proper, and there 's store
of it,
Though I've the better notion, all
agree,
Of fitting rooms up! hang the carpenter,
Neat ship-shape fixings and contriv-
ances—
I would have brought my Jerome,
frame and all!
And meantime you bring nothing:
never mind—
You've proved your artist-nature:
what you don't,
You might bring, so despise me, as I
say.

Now come, let's backward to the
starting-place.
See my way: we're two college friends,
suppose—
Prepare together for our voyage, then,
Each note and check the other in his
work,—
Here's mine, a bishop's outfit; criti-
cize!
What's wrong? why won't you be a
bishop too?

Why, first, you don't believe, you
don't and can't,
(Not stately, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith—and what
remains
But say so, like the honest man you
are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to
think,
Must find believing every whit as hard,
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now, wait, my friend: well, I do not
believe—
If you'll accept no faith that is not
fixed,

Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
(You're wrong—I mean to prove it in
due time.)

Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our
dogmas then

With both of us, though in unlike
degree, *be it*.

Missing full credence—overboard with
them!

I mean to meet you on your own
premise—

Good, there go mine in company with
yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers
both,

Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow, and for ever, pray?
You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I
think!

In no-wise! all we've gained is, that
belief,

As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor.
Where's

The gain? how can we guard our un-
belief,

Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem
here.

Just when we are safest, there's a sun-
set-touch,

A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's
death,

A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and
fears

As old and new at once as Nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic
ring,

Round the ancient idol, on his base
again,—

The grand Perhaps! we look on help-
lessly,—

There the old misgivings, crooked ques-
tions are—

This good God,—what He could do, if
He would,

Would, if He could—then must have
done long since:

If so, when, where, and how ? some way must be,—

Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after
all.

Why not, 'The Way, the Truth, the
Life ?'

—That way

Over the mountain, which who stands
upon

Is apt to doubt if it be indeed a road ;
While if he views it from the waste
itself,

Up goes the line there, plain from base
to brow,

Not vague, mistakeable ! what's a
break or two

Seen from the unbroken desert either
side ?

And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should
prove at last

The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is
faith ?

And so we stumble at truth's very test !
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt :
We called the chess-board white,—we
call it black.

'Well,' you rejoin, 'the end's no
worse, at least

We've reason for both colours on the
board :

Why not confess, then, where I drop the
faith

And you the doubt, that I'm as right
as you ?'

Because, friend, in the next place,
this being so,

And both things even,—faith and
unbelief

Left to a man's choice,—we'll proceed
a step,

Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-
passenger's—

The man made for the special life of the
world—

Do you forget him ? I remember
though !

Consult our ship's conditions and you
find

One and but one choice suitable to all,
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or un-
belief

Bears upon life, determines its whole
course,

Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I ;
I mean to take it as it is,—and you
Not so you'll take it,—though you get
nought else.

I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me
fruit

In power, peace, pleasantness and length
of days.

I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.

—For you, it does, however ?—that
we'll try !

'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at
least,

Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset,
'Friends,

I absolutely and peremptorily
Believe!'—I say, faith is my waking life.

One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at
intervals,

We know, but waking's the main point
with us,

And my provision's for life's waking
part.

Accordingly, I use heart, head and
hands

All day, I build, scheme, study and
make friends ;

And when night overtakes me, down
I lie,

Sleep, dream a little, and get done
with it,

The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What's midnight's doubt before the
day'spring's faith ?

You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognize the night, give dreams
their weight—

To be consistent you should keep your
bed,

Abstain from healthy acts that prove
 you a man,
 For fear you drowse perhaps at un-
 awares !
 And certainly at night you'll sleep and
 dream,
 Live through the day and bustle as you
 please.
 And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
 To unbelieve as I to still believe ?
 Well, and the common sense of the
 world calls you
 Bed-ridden,—and its good things come
 to me.
 Its estimation, which is half the fight,
 That 's the first cabin-comfort I secure—
 The next . . . but you perceive with half
 an eye !
 Come, come, it's best believing, if we
 may—
 You can't but own that !

Next, concede again—
 If once we choose belief, on all accounts
 We can't be too decisive in our faith,
 Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
 To suit the world which gives us the
 good things.

In every man's career are certain points
 Whereon he dares not be indifferent ;
 The world detects him clearly, if he dares,
 As baffled at the game, and losing life.
 He may care little or he may care much
 For riches, honour, pleasure, work,
 repose,

Since various theories of life and life's
 Success are extant which might easily
 Comport with either estimate of these ;
 And whose chooses wealth or poverty,
 Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
 Because his fellows would choose other-
 wise :

We let him choose upon his own
 account
 So long as he's consistent with his
 choice.

But certain points, left wholly to him-
 self,

When once a man has arbitrated on,
 We say he must succeed there or go
 hang.

Thus, he should wed the woman he loves
 most

Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or
 need—

For he can't wed twice. Then, he must
 avouch

Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
 The form of faith his conscience holds
 the best,

Whate'er the process of conviction
 was :

For nothing can compensate his mistake
 On such a point, the man himself being
 judge—

He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his
 soul.

Well now, there 's one great form of
 Christian faith

I happened to be born in—which to
 teach

Was given me as I grew up, on all
 hands,

As best and readiest means of living by ;
 The same on examination being proved
 The most pronounced moreover, fixed,
 precise

And absolute form of faith in the whole
 world—

Accordingly, most potent of all forms
 For working on the world. Observe,
 my friend,

Such as you know me, I am free to say,
 In these hard latter days which hamper
 one,

Myself, by no immoderate exercise
 Of intellect and learning, and the tact
 To let external forces work for me,
 —Bid the street's stones be bread and
 they are bread,

Bid Peter's creed, or, rather, Hilde-
 brand's,

Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
 And make my life an ease and joy and
 pride,

It does so,—which for me's a great
 point gained,

Who have a soul and body that exact
 A comfortable care in many ways.

There's power in me and will to
 dominate

Which I must exercise, they hurt me
 else :

In many ways I need mankind's re-
 spect,

Obedience, and the love that 's born of fear :

While at the same time, there 's a taste

I have, *pleasant feeling*
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,

Refuses to digest these dainties crude.

The naked life is gross till clothed upon :

I must take what men offer, with a

grace

As though I would not, could I help it, take !

An uniform I wear though over-rich—

Something imposed on me, no choice of

mine ;

No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's

sake

And despicable therefore ! now men

kneel

And kiss my hand—of course the

Church's hand.

Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,

And thus that it should be I have pro-

cured ;

And thus it could not be another way,

I venture to imagine.

You'll reply—

So far my choice, no doubt, is a success ;

But were I made of better elements,

With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like

you,

I hardly would account the thing

success

Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,

We speak of what is—not of what might

be,

And how 'twere better if 'twere other-

wise.

I am the man you see here plain

enough—

Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must

lead beasts' lives !

Suppose I own at once to tail and

claws—

The tailless man exceeds me ; but being

tailed

I'll lash out lion-fashion, and leave apes

To dock their stump and dress their

haunches up.

My business is not to remake myself,

But make the absolute best of what

God made.

Or—our first simile—though you proved me doomed

To a viler berth still, to the steerage-

hole,

The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should

strive

To make what use of each were possible;

And as this cabin gets upholstery,

That hutch should rustle with sufficient

straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge

quite so fast

I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes

Enumerated so complacently,

On the mere ground that you forsooth

can find

In this particular life I choose to lead

No fit provision for them. Can you not ?

Say you, my fault is I address myself

To grosser estimators than I need ?

And that 's no way of holding up the

soul—

Which, nobler, needs men's praise per-

haps, yet knows

One wise man's verdict outweighs all

the fools'.

Wouldlikethetwo, but, forced to choose,

takes that ?

I pine among my million imbeciles

(You think) aware some dozen men of

sense

Eye me and know me, whether I

believe

In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,

And am a fool, or disbelieve in her

And am a knave,—approve in neither

case,

Withhold their voices though I look

their way :

Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's

end

(The thing they gave at Florence,—

what 's its name ?)

While the mad houseful's plaudits near

out-bang

His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and

bones,

He looks through all the roaring and the

wreaths

Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—

That even your prime men who appraise
 their kind
 Are men still, catch a wheel within a
 wheel,
 See more in a truth than the truth's
 simple self,
 Confuse themselves. You see lads walk
 the street
 Sixty the minute; what 's to note in that?
 You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-
 stack;
 Him you must watch—he 's sure to fall,
 yet stands!
 Our interest 's on the dangerous edge of
 things.
 The honest thief, the tender murderer,
 The superstitious atheist, demireps
 That love and save their souls in new
 French books—
 We watch while these in equilibrium
 keep
 The giddy line midway: one step
 aside,
 They're classed and done with. I, then,
 keep the line
 Before your sages,—just the men to
 shrink
 From the gross weights, coarse scales,
 and labels broad
 You offer their refinement. Fool or
 knave?
 Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
 When there 's a thousand diamond
 weights between?
 So I enlist them. Your picked Twelve,
 you'll find,
 Profess themselves indignant, scandal-
 ized
 At thus being held unable to explain
 How a superior man who disbelieves
 May not believe as well: that 's
 Schelling's way!
 It 's through my coming in the tail of
 time,
 Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
 Had I been born three hundred years
 ago
 They'd say, 'What 's strange? Blou-
 gram of course believes;'
 And, seventy years since, 'disbelieves
 of course.'
 But now, 'He may believe; and yet,
 and yet

How can he?'—All eyes turn with
 interest.
 Whereas, step off the line on either
 side—
 You, for example, clever to a fault,
 The rough and ready man that write
 apace,
 Read somewhat seldomer, think per-
 haps even less—
 You disbelieve! Who wonders and
 who cares?
 Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropt with
 wax,
 All Peter's chains about his waist, his
 back
 Brave with the needlework of Noodle-
 dom,
 Believes! Again, who wonders and
 who cares?
 But I, the man of sense and learning
 too,
 The able to think yet act, the this, the
 that,
 I, to believe at this late time of day!
 Enough; you see, I need not fear con-
 tempt.
 —Except it 's yours! admire me as
 these may,
 You don't. But whom at least do you
 admire?
 Present your own perfections, your
 ideal,
 Your pattern man for a minute—oh,
 make haste!
 Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?
 Concede the means; allow his head and
 hand,
 (A large concession, clever as you are)
 Good!—In our common primal ele-
 ment
 Of unbelief (we can't believe, you
 know—
 We're still at that admission, recollect)
 Where do you find—apart from, tower-
 ing o'er
 The secondary temporary aims
 Which satisfy the gross tastes you
 despise—
 Where do you find his star?—his crazy
 trust
 God knows through what or in what?
 it 's alive

And shines and leads him and that's
all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall
point
Such ends as his were, and direct the
means
Of working out our purpose straight as
his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on
success
With after-care to justify the same ?
—Be a Napoleon and yet disbelieve !
Why, the man's mad, friend, take his
light away.
What's the vague good of the world for
which you'd dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions
up ?
We neither of us see it ! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of their
brains
And writhing of their bowels and so
forth,
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time !
Can I mistake for some clear word of
God
(Which were my ample warrant for it
all)
His puff of hazy instincts, idle talk,
'The State, that's I,' quack-nonsense
about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his
last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his
own ;
The whole to end that dimmest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the
Church,
And resurrection of the old *régime*.
Would I, who hope to live a dozen
years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and
such ?
No : for, concede me but the merest
chance
Doubt may be wrong—there's judg-
ment, life to come !
With just that chance, I dare not.
Doubt proves right ?

This present life is all ?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years without a chance
That wedding an Arch-Duchess, wearing
lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined
names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me
dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like !
Therefore, I will not.

Take another case ;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poet's ? shall we
write
Hamlets, Othellos—make the world our
own,
Without a risk to run of either sort ?
I can't !—to put the strongest reason
first.
'But try,' you urge, 'the trying shall
suffice ;
The aim, if reached or not, makes great
the life :
Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to
fate !'
Spare my self-knowledge—there's no
fooling me !
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I'm a Shakespeare, let the well
alone—
Why should I try to be what now I
am ?
If I'm no Shakespeare, as too prob-
able,—
His power and consciousness and self-
delight
And all we want in common, shall I
find—
Trying for ever ? while on points of
taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he
and I
Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realizes most ?
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I pos-
sess.
He had the imagination ; stick to that !
Let him say 'In the face of my soul's
works
Your world is worthless and I touch it
not

Lest I should wrong them '—I'll with-
 draw my plea.
 But does he say so ? look upon his life !
 Himself, who only can, gives judg-
 ment there.
 He leaves his towers and gorgeous
 palaces
 To build the trimmest house in Strat-
 ford town ;
 Saves money, spends it, owns the worth
 of things,
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's
lute ;
 Enjoys a show, respects the puppets,
 too,
 And none more, had he seen its entry
 once,
 Than 'Pandulph, of fair Milan car-
dinal.'
 Why then should I who play that
 personage,
 The very Pandulph Shakespeare's
 fancy made,
 Be told that had the poet chanced to
 start
 From where I stand now (some degree
 like mine
 Being just the goal he ran his race to
 reach)
 He would have run the whole race back,
 forsooth,
 And left being Pandulph, to begin
 write plays ?
 Ah, the earth's best can be but the
 earth's best !
 Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit
 at home
 And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
 Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman
 walls,
 And English books, none equal to his
 own,
 Which I read, bound in gold, (he never
 did).
 —Terni and Naples' bay and Gothard's
 top—
 Eh, friend ? I could not fancy one of
 these—
 But, as I pour this claret, there they
 are—
 I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard
 last July
 With ten mules to the carriage and a bed

Slung inside ; is my hap the worse for
 that ?
 We want the same things, Shakespeare
 and myself,
 And what I want, I have : he, gifted
 more,
 Could fancy he too had it when he
 liked,
 But not so thoroughly that if fate
 allowed
 He would not have it also in my sense.
 We play one game. I send the ball
 aloft
 No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
 Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and
 high
 Which sends them back to me : I wish
 and get.
 He struck balls higher and with better
 skill,
 But at a poor fence level with his head,
 And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of
 arms,
 Successful dealings in his grain and
 wool,—
 While I receive Heaven's incense in my
 nose
 And style myself the cousin of Queen
 Bess.
 Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the
 game ?
 Believe—and our whole argument
 breaks up.
 Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat ;
 Only, we can't command it ; fire and life
 Are all, dead matter's nothing, we
 agree :
 And be it a mad dream or God's very
 breath,
 The fact's the same,—belief's fire once
 in us,
 Makes of all else mere stuff to show
 itself :
 We penetrate our life with such a glow
 As fire lends wood and iron—this turns
 steel,
 That burns to ash—all's one, fire
 proves its power
 For good or ill, since men call flare
 success.
 But paint a fire, it will not therefore
 burn.

Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!

Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,

Incomparably better than my own.

He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,

Sets up God's rule again by simple means,

Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.

He flared out in the flaring of mankind;

Such Luther's luck was—how shall such be mine?

If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:

And if he did not altogether—well,

Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be

I might be also. But to what result?

He looks upon no Future: Luther did.

What can I gain on the denying side?

Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,

Read the text right, emancipate the world—

The emancipated world enjoys itself

With scarce a thank-you—Blougram told it first

It could not owe a farthing,—not to him

More than Saint Paul! 'twould press its pay, you think?

Then add there's still that plaguy hundredth chance

Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—

For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured

A real Heaven in his heart throughout his life,

Supposing death a little altered things.

'Ay, but since really you lack faith,' you cry,

'You run the same risk really on all sides,

In cool indifference as bold unbelief.

As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.

It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,

Nor more available to do faith's work Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!'

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.

Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.

We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:

I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.

The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,

If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?

By life and man's free will, God gave for that!

To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:

That's our one act, the previous work's His own.

You criticize the soil? it reared this tree—

This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!

What matter though I doubt at every pore,

Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,

Doubts in the trivial work of every day,

Doubts at the very bases of my soul

In the grand moments when she probes herself—

If finally I have a life to show,

The thing I did, brought out in evidence Against the thing done to me under-ground

By Hell and all its brood, for aught I know?

I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?

All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this?

It is the idea, the feeling and the love God means mankind should strive for and show forth,

Whatever be the process to that end,—And not historic knowledge, logic sound,

And metaphysical acumen, sure!

'What think ye of Christ,' friend? when all's done and said,

Like you this Christianity or not?

It may be false, but will you wish it true?

Has it your vote to be so if it can?

Trust you an instinct silenced long ago

That will break silence and enjoin you
love

What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you
despise ?

**If you desire faith—then you've faith
enough:**

What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves?

You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,
On hearsay : it's a favourable one :

'But still,' (you add) 'there was no such good man.'

Because of contradictions in the facts.
One proves, for instance, he was born in

Rome,
This Blougram—yet throughout the

I see he figures as an Englishman.'

Well, the two things are reconcilable.
But would I rather you discovered that,

Subjoining—' Still, what matter though they be ?

Pure faith indeed—you know not
what you ask!

Naked belief in God the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, scars too

The sense of conscious creatures to be

It were the seeing Him, no flesh shall

Some think, Creation's meant to show

Him forth:
I say, it's meant to hide Him all it can,

And that's what all the blessed Evil's
for.

**Its use in Time is to environ us.
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield**

enough
Against that sight till we can bear its

stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain

And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once

Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the
place.

Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith means perpetual un-

Kept quiet like the snake 'neath /

Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels

Or, if that's too ambitious.—here's my

I need the excitation of a pinch

Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose

Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.

'Leave it in peace' advise the simple folk—

Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I—let doubt occasion still more

faith!

You'll say, once all believed, man,
woman, child,
In that deep middle, are these needles

In that dear middle-age these noodles
praise.

How you'd exult if I could put you
back
Six hundred years, blot out summer
and

Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not, ethics.
(Greek en time with the little negation)

(Greek endings with the little passing-bell
That signifies some faith's about to die)

That signifies some faith 's about to die)
And set you square with Genesis

When such a traveller told you his last

news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 'twas

But did not climb there—since 'twas
getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's

And robber-bands infest the mountain's
foot !
How should you feel, I ask, in such an

How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and

A man's worth something. God stoops
o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both
tug—
He's left, himself, in the middle: the
soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through
his life!
Never leave growing till the life to
come!
Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's
winks
That used to puzzle people whole-
somely—
Men have outgrown the shame of being
fools.
What are the laws of Nature, not to
bend
If the Church bid them?—brother
Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception,
then—
On to the rack with faith!—is my
advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, 'It can't be—
yet it shall!
Who am I, the worm, to argue with my
Pope?
Low things confound the high things!'
and so forth.
That's better than acquitting God with
grace
As some folks do. He's tried—no case
is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—He may go!

You'll say—the old system's not so
obsolete
But men believe still: ay, but who and
where?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break
fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? No, he
smiles;
Those laws are laws that can enforce
themselves.

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is
great,
My faith's still greater—then my
faith's enough,
I have read much, thought much,
experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my
fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-
clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, declassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points
as this!
I won't—that is, I can't throw one
away.
Supposing there's no truth in what I
said
About the need of trials to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end,
Clearing off one exorcism to see two;
There's ever a next in size, now grown
as big,
That meets the knife—I cut and cut
again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes
last
But Fichte's clever cut at God Him-
self?
Experimentalize on sacred things!
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor
brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk
alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.
You'd find the cutting-process to
your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies
unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it, you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; but my taste
proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast
hold
On the extreme end of the chain of
faith
Gives all the advantage, makes the
difference,

With the rough purlind mass we seek
to rule.

We are their lords, or they are free of us
Just as we tighten or relax that hold.
So, other matters equal, we'll revert
To the first problem—which, if solved
my way

And thrown into the balance, turns the
scale—

How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's
size.

Of course you are remarking all this
time

How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to
rule

The masses, and regard complacently
'The cabin,' in our old phrase! Well,
I do.

I act for, talk for, live for this world
now,

As this world calls for action, life and
talk—

No prejudice to what next world may
prove,

Whose new laws and requirements, my
best pledge

To observe then, is that I observe these
now,

Shall do hereafter what I do mean-
while.

Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyments: well, my
friend,

Why lose this life in the meantime, since
its use

May be to make the next life more
intense?

Do you know, I have often had a
dream

(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress still

Losing true life for ever and a day
Through ever trying to be and ever
being

In the evolution of successive spheres,
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having
reached,

It shoots with corresponding foolery

Halfway into the next still, on and off!
As when a traveller, bound from North
to South,

Scouts fur in Russia—what's its use in
France?

In France spurs flannel—where's its
need in Spain?

In Spain drops cloth—too cumbrous for
Algiers!

Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.

When, through his journey, was the fool
at ease?

I'm at ease now, friend—worldly in this
world

I take and like its way of life; I think
My brothers who administer the means
Live better for my comfort—that's
good too;

And God, if He pronounce upon it all,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If He keep silence,—why, for you or me
Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-
day's 'Times,'

What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what
life we lead?

You meet me at this issue—you
declare,

All special-pleading done with, truth is
truth,

And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it's better, if we
doubt,

To say so, acting up to our truth
perceived

However feebly. Do then,—act away!
'Tis there I'm on the watch for you!
How one acts

Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:
And how you'll act is what I fain
would see

If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your
life's scheme

As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there's no higher law that
counterchecks.

Put natural religion to the test
You've just demolished the revealed
with—quick,

Down to the root of all that checks
your will,

All prohibition to lie, kill and thieve
Or even to be an atheistic priest !
Suppose a pricking to incontinence—
Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the
first

Whoso embraced a woman in the plain,
Threw club down, and forewent his
brains beside,

So stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother-savage club in hand—
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves—
I read this in a French book t' other
day.

Does law so analysed coerce you much ?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where
matters end,

But you who reach where the first
thread begins,

You'll soon cut that !—which means
you can, but won't

Through certain instincts, blind, un-
reasoned-out,

You dare not set aside, you can't tell
why,

But there they are, and so you let them
rule.

Then, friend, you seem as much a slave
as I,

A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to
get,

Suppose he has a master after all !

You own your instincts—why, what
else do I,

Who want, am made for, and must have
a God

Ere I can be aught, do aught ?—no
mere name

Want, but the true thing with what
proves its truth,

To wit, a relation from that thing to me,
Touching from head to foot—which

touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of
ours !

I live my life here ; yours you dare not
live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please
subjoin)

Disfigure such a life and call it names,

While, in your mind, remains another
way

For simple men : knowledge and power
have rights,

But ignorance and weakness have rights
too.

There needs no crucial effort to find
truth

If here or there or anywhere about—
We ought to turn each side, try hard

and see,
And if we can't, be glad we've earned
at least

The right, by one laborious proof the
more,

To graze in peace earth's pleasant
pasturage.

Men are not angels, neither are they
brutes.

Something we may see, all we cannot
see—

What need of lying ? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most
minute

In what I think a Pan's face—you,
mere cloud :

I swear I hear him speak and see him
wink,

For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there's any cloud
at all.

You take the simpler life—ready to see,
Willing to see—for no cloud's worth a
face—

And leaving quiet what no strength can
move,

And which, who bids you move ? who
has the right ?

I bid you ; but you are God's sheep,
not mine—

'*Pastor est tui Dominus.*' You find
In these the pleasant pastures of this life

Much you may eat without the least
offence,

Much you don't eat because your maw
objects,

Much you would eat but that your
fellow-flock

Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so
well

You cannot please yourself, offending
them—

Though when they seem exorbitantly
 sheep,
 You weigh your pleasure with their
 butts and bleats
 And strike the balance. Sometimes
 certain fears
 Restrain you—real checks since you find
 them so—
 Sometimes you please yourself and
 nothing checks;
 And thus you graze through life with
 not one lie,
 And like it best,

But do you, in truth's name ?
 If so, you beat—which means, you are
 not I—
 Who needs must make earth mine and
 feed my fill
 Not simply unbutted at, unbickered
 with,
 But motioned to the velvet of the ~~sward~~ ^{your sward}
 By those obsequious wethers' very
 selves.
 Look at me, sir; my age is double
 yours:
 At yours, I knew beforehand, so
 enjoyed,
 What now I should be—as, permit the
 word,
 I pretty well imagine your whole range
 And stretch of tether twenty years to
 come.
 We both have minds and bodies much
 alike.
 In truth's name, don't you want my
 bishopric,
 My daily bread, my influence and my
 state ?
 You're young, I'm old, you must be
 old one day;
 Will you find then, as I do hour by
 hour,
 Women their lovers kneel to, that cut
 curls
 From your fat lap-dog's ears to grace a
 brooch—
 Dukes, that petition just to kiss your
 ring—
 With much beside you know or may
 conceive ?
 Suppose we die to-night: well, here
 am I,

Such were my gains, life bore this fruit
 to me,
 While writing all the same my articles
 On music, poetry, the fictile vase
 Found at Albano, chess, or Anacreon's
 Greek.
 But you—the highest honour in your
 life,
 The thing you'll crown yourself with,
 all your days,
 Is—dining here and drinking this last
 glass
 I pour you out in sign of ~~amity~~ ^{friend}
 Before we part for ever. Of your power
 And social influence, worldly worth in
 short,
 Judge what's my estimation by the
 fact,
 I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
 Hint secrecy on one of all these words !
 You're shrewd and know that should
 you publish one
 The world would brand the lie—my
 enemies first,
 Who'd sneer—'the bishop's an arch-
 hypocrite,
 And knave perhaps, but not so frank a
 fool.'
 Whereas I should not dare for both my
 ears
 Breathe one such syllable, smile one
 such smile,
 Before my chaplain who reflects my-
 self—
 My shade's so much more potent than
 your flesh.
 What's your reward, self-~~abnegating~~
 friend ?
 Stood you confessed of those excep-
 tional
 And privileged great natures that dwarf
 mine—
 A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
 A poet just about to print his ode,
 A statesman with a scheme to stop this
 war,
 An artist whose religion is his art,
 I should have nothing to object ! such
 men
 Carry the fire, all things grow warm to
 them,
 Their druggist's worth my purple, they
 beat me.

But you,—you're just as little those
as I—

You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write stately for Blackwood's Maga-
zine,

Believe you see two points in Hamlet's
soul

Unseized by the Germans yet—which
view you'll print—

Meantime the best you have to show
being still

That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens,—what's
its name?

'The Slum and Cellar—or Whitechapel
life

Limned after dark!' it made me laugh,
I know,

And pleased a month and brought you
in ten pounds.

—Success I recognize and compliment,
And therefore give you, if you choose,
three words

(The card and pencil-scratch is quite
enough)

Which whether here, in Dublin or New
York,

Will get you, prompt as at my eye-
brow's wink,

Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not
ours.

Go write your lively sketches—be the first
'Blougram, or The Eccentric Con-
fidence'—

Or better simply say, 'The Outward-
bound.'

Why, men as soon would throw it in my
teeth

As copy and quote the infamy chalked
broad

About me on the church-door opposite.
You will not wait for that experience
though,

I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue—not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked
his hour

Sylvester Blougram, styled in *partibus*
Episcopis, nec non—(the deuce knows
what

It's changed to by our novel hier-
archy)

With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his
plate's design,

And ranged the olive-stones about its
edge,

While the great bishop rolled him out
his mind.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half
he spoke.

The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentatory purposes,

He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts

That crossed his mind, amusing because
new,

He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they
seemed

Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same
way twice)

While certain Hell-deep instincts,
man's weak tongue

Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled Hell-deep ('tis an old
mistake

'To place Hell at the bottom of the earth')
He ignored these,—not having in readi-
ness

Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by
wrong names.

'On the whole,' he thought, 'I justify
myself

On every point where cavillers like this
Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of
fence—

I close—he's worsted, that's enough
for him;

He's on the ground! if the ground
should break away

I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
Beneath it, both of us may sink and
reach.

His ground was over mine and broke
the first:

So let him sit with me this many a year!'

He did not sit five minutes. Just a
week

Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
(Something had struck him in the
'Outward-bound')

Another way than Blougram's purpose
(was)

And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for
three)

And started for Australia—there, I
hope,

By this time he has tested his first
plough,

And studied his last chapter of St.
John.

CLEON

'As certain also of your own poets have
said'—

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled
isles,

Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light
wave lisps 'Greece')—

To Protos in his Tyranny: much
health!

They give thy letter to me, even
now:

I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unloads
Gift after gift; they block my court at
last

And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of
thee:

And one white she-slave from the group
dispersed

Of black and white slaves, (like the
chequer-work

Pavement, at once my nation's work
and gift,

Now covered with this settle-down of
doves)

One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white
hands

Commends to me the strainer and the
cup

Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses
mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munifi-
cence!

For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its
joy,

Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate

To help on life in straight ways, broad
enough

For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of
toil,

Or through dim lulls of unapparent
growth,

Or when the general work 'mid good
acclaim

Climbed with the eye to cheer the archi-
tect,

Didst ne'er engage in work for mere
work's sake—

Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,

Whence, all the tumult of the building
hushed,

Thou first of men mightst look out to
the East:

The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest
the sun.

For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,

Making this slave narrate thy fortunes,
speak

Thy great words, and describe thy royal
face—

Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives
the most

Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets
me here.

It is as thou hast heard: in one short
life

I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.

That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,

So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul
their nets.

The image of the sun-god on the phare
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is
mine;

The Poecile, o'er-storied its whole
length,

As thou didst hear, with painting, is
mine too.

I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before ;
And I have written three books on the
soul,

Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.

For music,—why, I have combined the
moods,

Inventing one. In brief, all arts are
mine ;

Thus much the people know and recog-
nize,

Throughout our seventeen islands.
Marvel not.

We of these latter days, with greater
mind

Than our forerunners, since more com-
posite,

Look not so great, beside their simple
way,

To a judge who only sees one way at
once,

One mind-point, and no other at a
time,—

Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant
for ours ;

And ours is greater, had we skill to
know.

For, what we call this life of men on
earth,

This sequence of the soul's achieve-
ments here,

Being, as I find much reason to con-
ceive,

Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,

But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced
complete,

Endure effacement by another part ?
Was the thing done ?—Then, what's
to do again ?

See, in the chequered pavement oppo-
site,

Suppose the artist made a perfect
rhomb,

And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,

But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture ; there it lies.

So, first the perfect separate forms were
made,

The portions of mankind—and after,
so,

Occurred the combination of the same.
Or where had been a progress, other-
wise ?

Mankind, made up of all the single
men,—

In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now, mark me—those divine men of
old time

Have reached, thou sayest well, each at
one point

The outside verge that rounds our
faculty ;

And where they reached, who can do
more than reach ?

It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a
sphere,

And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the
rest

In due succession : but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied
sphere,

Fills it more fully than the water did ;
Holds thrice the weight of water in
itself

Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first
full

Up to the visible height—and after,
void ;

Not knowing air's more hidden pro-
perties.

And thus our soul, misknown, cries out
to Zeus

To vindicate his purpose in our life—
Whystay we on the earth unless to grow ?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction
out,

That he or other God, descended here
And, once for all, showed simultane-
ously

What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I
say,

The worth both absolute and relative

Of all his children from the birth of time,
 His instruments for all appointed work.
 I now go on to image,—might we hear
 The judgment which should give the due to each,
 Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
 And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere !
 This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,
 That years and days, the summers and the springs
 Follow each other with unwaning powers ;
 The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far
 Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;
 The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;
 The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;
 The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers ;
 That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
 Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,
 Refines upon the women of my youth.
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates ?
 I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—
 Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
 And painted men like Phidias and his friend :
 I am not great as they are, point by point :
 But I have entered into sympathy
 With these four, running these into one soul,
 Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.
 Say, is it nothing that I know them all ?
 The wild flower was the larger—I have dashed
 Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
 Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
 And show a better flower if not so large.

I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods
 Whose gift alone it is ! which, shall I dare
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
 Discourse of lightly or depreciate ?
 It might have fallen to another's hand—what then ?
 I pass too surely : let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.

This being with me as I declare, O king,
 My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,

So done by me, accepted so by men—
 Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)

I must not be accounted to attain
 The very crown and proper end of life.
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,

I face death with success in my right hand :

Whether I fear death less than dost thyself

The fortunate of men. ' For ' (writest thou)

' Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought :

Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,

The pictures men shall study ; while my life,

Complete and whole now in its power and joy,

Dies altogether with my brain and arm.
 Is lost indeed ; since, what survives myself ?

The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,

Set on the promontory which I named.
 And that—some supple courtier of my heir

Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,

To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.

I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go !'

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
 Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
 Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
 That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?
 That imperfection means perfection hid,
 Reserved in part, to grace the after-time ?
 If, in the morning of philosophy,
 Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived,
 Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
 On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
 Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—
 Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
 The perfectness of others yet unseen.
 Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
 'Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
 Do more for visible creatures than is done ?'
 Thou wouldst have answered, 'Ay, by making each
 Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
 All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
 The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
 And slides, the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,
 Till life's mechanics can no further go—
 And all this joy in natural life, is put,
 Like fire from off Thy finger into each,
 So exquisitely perfect is the same.
 But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are;
 It has them, not they it: and so I choose
 For man, Thy last premeditated work
 (If I might add a glory to the scheme)
 That a third thing should stand apart from both,
 A quality arise within the soul,
 Which, intro-active, made to supervise
 And feel the force it has may view itself,

And so be happy.' Man might live at first
 The animal life: but is there nothing more ?
 In due time, let him critically learn
 How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
 Of his own life's adaptabilities,
 The more joy-giving will his life become.
 The man who hath this quality, is best.
 .But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :
 'Let progress end at once,—man make no step
 Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
 Using his senses, not the sense of sense.'
 In man there's failure, only since he left
 The lower and unconscious forms of life.
 We called it an advance, the rendering plain
 A spirit might grow conscious of that life,
 And, by new lore so added to the old,
 Take each step higher over the brute's head.
 This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
 Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
 Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
 Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
 A tower that crowns a country. But alas !
 The soul now climbs it just to perish there,
 For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—
 We know this, which we had not else perceived)
 That there's a world of capability
 For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
 Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
 And still the flesh replies, 'Take no jot more
 Than ere thou climbedst the tower to look abroad !
 Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought

Deduction to it.' We struggle—fain
to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to
life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness.
No,
It skills not: life's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to
take.
They praise a fountain in my garden
here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see
it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills
shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take
the same?
The artificer has given her one small
tube
Past power to widen or exchange—
what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she
could?
She cannot lift beyond her first thin
thread,
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to
boast
'See, man, how happy I live, and
despair—
That I may be still happier—for thy
use!'
If this were so, we could not thank our
Lord,
As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not
so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I
ask—
And get no answer: and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the
more.
Most progress is most failure! thou
sayest well.

The last point 'now':—thou dost
except a case—
Holding joy not impossible to one

With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—
Who leave behind me living works
indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a
word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes
than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the know-
ing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the
king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair,
wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phoebus, am I there-
fore young?
Methinks I'm older that I bowed my-
self
The many years of pain that taught me
art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to
prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed,
is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is some-
thing too.
Yon rower with the moulded muscles
there
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's
an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that
young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well—
thou art king!

'But,' sayest thou—(and I marvel, I
repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word)
'what
Thou writest, paintest, stays: that
does not die:
Sappho survives, because we sing her
songs,
And Aeschylus, because we read his
plays!'

Why, if they live still, let them come
and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy
cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I
survive ?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged,
more keen ;
While every day my hairs fall more and
more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years
increase—
The horror quickening still from year to
year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least
enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my
worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's
mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-
much,
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by
Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces
us :
That, stung by straitness of our life,
made strait
On purpose to make sweet the life at
large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call
death
We burst there as the worm into the
fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his
wings. But, no !
Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and, alas,
He must have done so, were it possible !

Live long and happy, and in that
thought die,
Glad for what was. Farewell. And
for the rest,

I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus—we have heard
his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with
him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to
know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian
Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circum-
cised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us ?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all.
He writeth, doth he ? well, and he may
write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars ! certain
slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached
him and Christ ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrines could be held by no
sane man

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun
perceives
First when he visits, last, too, when he
leaves
The world ; and, vainly favoured, it
repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of
snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I
know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes
ever
At his approach ; and, in the lost
endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the
grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like
face.
Men nobly call by many a name the
Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large

Calm front of snow like a triumphal
 target
 Is reared, and still with old names,
 fresh ones vie,
 Each to its proper praise and own
 account:
 Men call the flower, the Sunflower,
 sportively.

II

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold
 look
 Across the waters to this twilight nook,
 —The far sad waters, Angel, to this
 nook!

III

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East
 indeed?
 Go! Saying ever as thou dost pro-
 ceed,
 That I, French Rudel, choose for my
 device
 A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
 Before its idol. See! These inexpert
 And hurried fingers could not fail to
 hurt
 The woven picture; 'tis a woman's
 skill
 Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
 Or well, the work is finished. Say,
 men feed
 On songs I sing, and therefore bask the
 bees
 On my flower's breast as on a platform
 broad:
 But, as the flower's concern is not for
 these
 But solely for the sun, so men applaud
 In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
 But to the East—the East! Go, say
 this, Pilgrim dear!

ONE WORD MORE¹

TO E. B. B.

London, September, 1855

I

THERE they are, my fifty men and
 women
 Naming me the fifty poems finished!

Take them, Love, the book and me
 together:
 Where the heart lies, let the brain lie
 also.

II

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
 Made and wrote them in a certain
 volume

Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
 Else he only used to draw Madonnas,
 'These, the world might view—but One,
 the volume.

Who that one, you ask? Your heart
 instructs you.

Did she live and love it all her life-
 time?

Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
 Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
 Where it lay in place of Rafael's
 glory,

Rafael's cheek so duteous and so
 loving—

Cheek, the world was wont to hail a
 painter's,

Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a
 poet's?

III

You and I would rather read that
 volume,

(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of
 Rafael,

Would we not? than wonder at
 Madonnas—

Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,

Her, that's left with lilies in the
 Louvre—

Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV

You and I will never read that volume.
 Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
 Guarded long the treasure-book and
 loved it.

Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
 Cried, and the world cried too, 'Ours—
 the treasure!'

Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

¹ Originally appended to the collection of Poems called 'Men and Women,' the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this volume.

v

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:

Whom to please? You whisper 'Beatrice.'

While he mused and traced it and retraced it,

(Peradventure with a pen corroded Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,

When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,

Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,

Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,

Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,

Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—

Dante, who loved well because he hated,

Hated wickedness that hinders loving, Dante standing, studying his angel,—

In there broke the folk of his Inferno. Says he—'Certain people of importance'

(Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to) 'Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet.'

Says the poet—'Then I stopped my painting.'

vi

You and I would rather see that angel,

Painted by the tenderness of Dante, Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

vii

You and I will never see that picture. While he mused on love and Beatrice,

While he softened o'er his outlined angel,

In they broke, those 'people of importance':

We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

viii

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?

This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not

Once, and only once, and for One only, (Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language

Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—Using nature that's an art to others,

Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.

Ay, of all the artists living, loving, None but would forego his proper dowry,—

Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—

Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,

Put to proof art alien to the artist's, Once, and only once, and for One only,

S, to be the man and leave the artist, Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

ix

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!

He who smites the rock and spreads the water,

Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,

Even he, the minute makes immortal. Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,

Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing. While he smites, how can he but remember,

So he smote before, in such a peril, When they stood and mocked—'Shall smiting help us?'

When they drank and sneered—'A stroke is easy!'

When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,

Throwing him forthanks—'But drought was pleasant.'

Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;

Thus the doing savours of disrelish;

Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;

O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,

Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.

For he bears an ancient wrong about
him,
Sees and knows again those phalanx'd
faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'custom'd
prelude—
'How shouldst thou, of all men, smite,
and save us?'
(Guesses what is like to prove the
sequel—
'Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought
was better.'

X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic
warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven
brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial
fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XI

Did he love one face from out the
thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and
wifely,
Were she but the Aethiopian bond-
slave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be
opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you
statues,
Make you music that should all-express
me;
So it seems: I stand on my attain-
ment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give
you.
Other heights in other lives, God
willing—
All the gifts from all the heights, your
own, Love!

XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense
must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and
nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last
time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-
brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient
proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in
little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with
flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe
thro' silver,
Fiftly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once, as
I do.

XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and
women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their
service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech,
a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbeliev-
ing:
I am mine and yours—the rest be all
men's,
Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true
person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this
sentence—
Pray you, look on these my men and
women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie
also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for
all things.

XV

Not but that you know me! Lo, the
moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,

Still we find her face, the thrice-trans-
figured.

Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-
breadth.

Full she flared it, lamping Sammin-
iato,

Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and
rounder,

Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impo-
verished,

Hard to greet, she traverses the house-
roofs,

Hurries with unhandsome thrift of
silver,

Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI

Central
idea

What, there's nothing in the moon
note-worthy?

Nay—for if that moon could love a
mortal,

Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
All her magic ('tis the old sweet my-
thos)

She would turn a new side to her
mortal,

Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman,
steersman—

Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,

Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—
him, even!

Think, the wonder of the moonstruck
mortal—

When she turns round, comes again in
heaven,

Opens out anew for worse or better?
Proves she like some portent of an ice-
berg

Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered
crystals?

Proves she as the paved-work of a
sapphire

Seen by Moses when he climbed the
mountain?

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the

Highest,

Stand upon the paved-work of a
sapphire.

Like the bodied heaven in his clear-
ness

Shone the stone, the sapphire of that
paved-work,

When they ate and drank and saw God
also!

XVII

What were seen? None knows, none
ever shall know.

Only this is sure—the sight were
other,

Not the moon's same side, born late in
Florence,

Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his
creatures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the
world with,

One to show a woman when he loves her.

XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you,
Love!

This to you—yourself my moon of
poets!

Ah, but that's the world's side, there's
the wonder,

Thus they see you, praise you, think
they know you.

There, in turn I stand with them and
praise you,

Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out
them,

Cross a step or two of dubious twi-
light,

Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed
of,

Where I hush and bless myself with
silence.

XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,

Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing
it,

Drew one angel—borne, see, on my
bosom!

R. B.

[The two following poems were not reprinted by Browning in any collected edition of his works. The Sonnet was written on August 17, 1834, and published in *The Monthly Repository*, 1834. *Ben Karshook's Wisdom* was written in April, 1854, and published in *The Keepsake*, 1856.]

SONNET

Eyes, calm beside thee, (Lady, could'st thou know !)
 May turn away thick with fast-gathering tears :
 I glance not where all gaze : thrilling and low
 Their passionate praises reach thee—my cheek wears
 Alone no wonder when thou passest by ;
 Thy tremulous lids bent and suffused reply
 To the irrepressible homage which doth glow
 On every lip but mine : if in thine ears
 Their accents linger—and thou dost recall
 Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,
 Beside each votarist whose lighted brow
 Wore worship like an aureole, 'O'er them all
 My beauty,' thou wilt murmur, 'did prevail
 Save that one only : '—Lady, could'st thou know !

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

I

'Would a man 'scape the rod ?'
 Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
 'See that he turn to God
 The day before his death.'

'Ay, could a man inquire
 When it shall come !' I say.
 The Rabbi's eye shoots fire—
 'Then let him turn to-day !'

II

Quoth a young Sadducee :
 'Reader of many rolls,
 Is it so certain we
 Have, as they tell us, souls ?'

'Son, there is no reply !'
 The Rabbi bit his beard :
 'Certain, a soul have I—
 We may have none,' he sneered.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,
 The Right-hand Temple-column,
 Taught babes in grace their grammar,
 And struck the simple, solemn.

[The following poem first appeared in the Royal Academy Catalogue for 1864 and was reprinted in the 1865 Selections, and in later editions of *Dramatis Personae*.]

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON

BUT give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow !
 Let them once more absorb me ! One look now
 Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
 Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond :
 Hold me but safe again within the bond
 Of one immortal look ! All woe that was,
 Forgotten, and all terror that may be
 Defied,—no past is mine, no future :
 look at me !

TRAGEDIES AND OTHER PLAYS

PIPPA PASSES

A DRAMA

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF 'ION,'—
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD.

London, 1841.

R. B.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE
TREVISAN. *A large, mean, airy
chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the
silk-mills, springing out of bed.*

DAY !

Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last ;
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurning and supprest it lay.—
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away ;
But forth one wavelet, then another,
curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be supprest.
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then
overflowed the world. ✓

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve-hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to, or
gifts above measure)

One of thy choices, or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee, or
freaks at thy pleasure)

—My Day, if I squander such labour or
leisure,

Thenshamefall on Asolo, mischief on me!
Thy long blue solemn hours serenely
flowing,

Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help
and good—

Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming,
going,

As if earth turned from work in game-
some mood—

All shall be mine ! But thou must treat
me not

As the prosperous are treated, those who
live

At hand here, and enjoy the higher
lot,

In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest ;

For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's
sorrow,

Cast off last night, will come again to-
morrow—

Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall
borrow

Sufficient strength of thee for a new-year's
sorrow.

All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular
dearth,

Get more joy, one way, if another, less:
Thou art my single day, God lends to
leaven

What were all earth else, with a feel of
heaven,—

Sole light that helps me through the
year, thy sun's !

Try, now ! Take Asolo's Four Happiest
Ones—

And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima ; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage ? All the while
thy rain

Beats fiercest on her shrub-house win-
dow-pane,

He will but press the closer, breathe
more warm

Against her cheek ; how should she
 mind the storm ?
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a
 gloom
 O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride
 and groom
 Save for their dear selves ? 'Tis their
 marriage-day ;
 And while they leave church, and go
 home their way,
 Hand clasping hand,—within each
 breast would be
 Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite
 of thee !
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
 With mist,—will Luigi and his mother
 grieve—
 The Lady and her child, unmatched,
 forsooth,
 She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
 For true content ? The cheerful town,
 warm, close,
 And safe, the sooner that thou art
 morose,
 Receives them ! And yet once again,
 outbreak
 In storm at night on Monsignor, they
 make
 Such stir about,—whom they expect
 from Rome
 To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,
 And say here masses proper to release
 A soul from pain,—what storm dares
 hurt his peace ?
 Calm would he pray, with his own
 thoughts to ward
 Thy thunder off, nor want the angels'
 guard !
 But Pippa—just one such mischance
 would spoil
 Her day that lightens the next twelve-
 month's toil
 At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil !
 And here I let time slip for nought !
 Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam—caught
 With a single splash from my ewer !
 You that would mock the best pursuer,
 Was my basin over-deep ?
 One splash of water ruins you asleep,
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,
 Reeling, broken beyond healing—
 Now grow together on the ceiling !

That will task your wits !
 Whoever quenched fire first, hoped to see
 Morsel after morsel flee
 As merrily, as giddily . . .
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
 Where settles by degrees the radiant
 cripple ?
 Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon ?
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes'
 nipple,
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk
 bird's poll !
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the
 ripple
 Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch
 unroll
 Such turban-flowers ; I say, such lamps
 disperse
 Thick red flame through that dusk
 green universe !
 I am queen of thee, floweret ;
 And each fleshy blossom
 Preserve I not—(safer
 Than leaves that embower it,
 Or shells that embosom)
 —From weevil and chafer ?
 Laugh through my pane, then ;
 solicit the bee ;
 Gibe him, be sure ; and, in midst
 of thy glee,
 Love thy queen, worship me !
 —Worship whom else ? For am I not,
 this day,
 Whate'er I please ? What shall I please
 to-day ?
 My morning, noon, eve, night—how
 spend my day ?
 To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds
 silk,
 The whole year round, to earn just
 bread and milk :
 But, this one day, I have leave to
 go,
 And play out my fancy's fullest
 games ;
 I may fancy all day—and it shall
 be so—
 That I taste of the pleasures, am
 called by the names
 Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo !
 See ! Up the Hill-side yonder, through
 the morning,

Some one shall love me, as the world
calls love :

I am no less than Ottima, take warning !
The gardens, and the great stone house
above,

And other house for shrubs, all glass in
front,

Are mine ; where Sebald steals, as he is
wont,

To court me, while old Luca yet reposes ;
And therefore, till the shrub-house door
uncloses,

I . . . what, now ?—give abundant cause
for prate

About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face
down

The spitefullest of talkers in our town—
How we talk in the little town below !

But love, love, love—there's better
love, I know !

This foolish love was only day's first
offer ;

I choose my next love to defy the scoffer :
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom
sally

Out of Possagno church at noon ?

Their house looks over Orcana valley—
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima ? For I saw, beside,

Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash
Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black

bright tresses,

Blacker than all except the black eye-
lash ;

I wonder she contrives those lids no
dresses !

—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale

Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and
scarce touch,

Scarce touch, remember, Jules !—for
are not such

Used to be tended, flower-like, every
feature,

As if one's breath would fray the lily of
a creature ?

A soft and easy life these ladies lead !
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.

Oh, save that brow its virgin dim-
ness,

Keep that foot its lady primness,

Let those ankles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets
like me,

All but naked to the knee !
How will she ever grant her Jules
a bliss

So startling as her real first infant
kiss ?

Oh, no—not envy, this !

—Not envy, sure !—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,

In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me ?

Mine should have lapped me round from
the beginning ;

As little fear of losing it as winning !
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate
their wives,

And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the son and mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our Turret ; what

prevents
My being Luigi ? while that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is

stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to
bird—

(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they
talk,

Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than
friends)

—Let me be cared about, kept out of
harm,

And schemed for, safe in love as with
a charm ;

Let me be Luigi ! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father,
too !

Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's ; then why not have God's
love befall

Myself as, in the Palace by the Dome,
Monsignor ?—who to-night will bless
the home

Of his dead brother ; and God will bless
in turn

That heart which beats, those eyes
which mildly burn

With love for all men : I, to-night at
least,
Would be that holy and beloved priest !
Now wait !—even I already seem to
share
In God's love : what does New-year's
hymn declare ?
What other meaning do these verses
bear ?

*All service ranks the same with God :
If now, as formerly He trod
Paradise, His presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and
worst,
Are we ; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not 'a small event !' Why
'small ?'*

*Costs it more pain than this, ye call
A 'great event,' should come to pass,
Than that ? Unwind me from the
mass*

*Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fill short in, or exceed !*

And more of it, and more of it !—oh,
yes—

I will pass by, and see their happiness,
And envy none—being just as great, no
doubt,

Useful to men, and dear to God, as they !
A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday !

But let the sun shine ! Wherefore
repine ?

—With thee to lead me, O Day of
mine,

Down the grass-path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with
boughs,

Where the swallow never flew
As yet, nor cicala dared carouse—
Dared carouse !

[*She enters the street.*]

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, in-
side the Shrub-house. LUCA'S Wife,
✓ OTTIMA, and her Paramour the
German SEBALD.*

Seb. [sings.]

*Let the watching lids wink !
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think—
Deep into the night, drink !*

Otti. Night ? Such may be your
Rhine-land nights, perhaps ;
But this blood-red beam through the
shutter's chink,
—We call such light, the morning's : let
us see !

Mind how you grope your way, though !
How these tall

Naked geraniums straggle ! Push the
lattice

Behind that frame !—Nay, do I bid
you ?—Sebald,

It shakes the dust down on me ! Why,
of course

The slide-bolt catches.—Well, are you
content,

Or must I find you something else to
spoil ?

Kiss and be friends, my Sebald ! Is it
full morning ?

Oh, don't speak then !

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be !
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day—I observed that, as I
strolled

On mornings through the vale here :
country girls

Were noisy, washing garments in the
brook,

Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the
hills,

But no, your house was mute, would
ope no eye !

And wisely—you were plotting one
thing there,

Nature, another outside : I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron
bars,

Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
Oh, I remember !—and the peasants
laughed

And said, 'The old man sleeps with the
young wife.'

This house was his, this chair, this
window—his !

Otti. Ah, the clear morning ! I can
see St. Mark's :

That black streak is the belfry. Stop :
Vicenza

Should lie . . . There's Padua, plain
enough, that blue !

Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger.
Seb. Morning ?

It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where's dew? where's freshness? That
bruised plant, I bruised
In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's
mark

In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh shut the lattice, pray!

Seb. Let me lean out. I cannot scent
blood here,

Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!

How do you feel now, Ottima? There,
curse

The world and all outside! Let us
throw off

This mask: how do you bear yourself?

Let's out

With all of it!

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again
of it,

Till words cease to be more than words.

'His blood,'

For instance—let those two words mean
'His blood'

And nothing more. Notice, I'll say
them now,

'His blood.'

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent? who should repent, or
why?

What puts that in your head? Did I
once say

That I repented?

Otti. No, I said the deed—

Seb. 'The deed,' and 'the event'—
just now it was

'Our passion's fruit'—the devil take
such cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are—

Otti. Here is the wine;
I brought it when we left the house
above,

And glasses too—wine of both sorts.
Black? white, then?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat?
What are you?

Otti. There, trudges on his business
from the Duomo

Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood

And bare feet—always in one place at
church,

Close under the stone wall by the south
entry.

I used to take him for a brown cold piece
Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose

To let me pass—at first, I say, I used—
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened

on me,

I rather should account the plastered
wall

A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.

This, Sebald?

Seb. No—the white wine—the white
wine!

Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful

way,

Nor does it rise: pour on! To your
black eyes!

Do you remember last damned New
Year's day?

Otti. You brought those foreign
prints. We looked at them

Over the wine and fruit. I had to
scheme

To get him from the fire. Nothing but
saying

His own set wants the proof-mark,
roused him up

To hunt them out.

Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face!

Otti. Do you
Fondle me, then! who means to take

your life

For that, my Sebald?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima.
One thing's to guard against. We'll

not make much

One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,

Than yesterday—as if, Sweet, I sup-
posed

Proof upon proof was needed now, now
first,

To show I love you—yes, still love you—
love you

In spite of Luca and what's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our

thoughts,

White sneering old reproachful face and
all!

We'll even quarrel, Love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not
tied

By this—conceive you ?

Otti. Love !

Seb. Not tied so sure !

Because though I was wrought upon,
have struck

His insolence back into him—am I

So surely yours ?—therefore, forever
yours ?

Otti. Love, to be wise. (one counsel
pays another)

Should we have—months ago—when
first we loved,

For instance that May morning we two
stole

Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .

Seb. 'A thing'—there again—'a
thing !'

Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we
come upon

My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered
corpse

Within there, at his couch-foot, covered
close—

Would you have pored upon it ? Why
persist

In poring now upon it ? For 'tis here
As much as there in the deserted house :

You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse—I
hate . . .

Dare you stay here ? I would go back
and hold

His two dead hands, and say, I hate you
worse

Luca, than . . .

Seb. Off, off ; take your hands off
mine !

'Tis the hot evening—off ! oh, morning,
is it ?

Otti. There's one thing must be done ;
you know what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may
sleep

Anywhere in the whole wide house to-
night.

Seb. What would come, think you, if
we let him lie

Just as he is ? Let him lie there until

The angels take him : he is turned by
this

Off from his face, beside, as you will see.

Otti. This dusty pane might serve for
looking-glass.

Three, four—four grey hairs ! Is it so
you said

A plait of hair should wave across my
neck ?

No—thus way !

Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those

breasts of yours,

That this were undone ! Killing ?—Kill
the world

So Luca lives again !—ay, lives to
sputter

His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and
feign

Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering
here—

Bid me dispatch my business and begone.
I would . . .

Otti. See !

Seb. No, I'll finish ! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for
all ?

All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer—there's a recompense in guilt ;

One must be venturesome and fortunate :
What is one young for, else ? In age
we'll sigh

O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days
flown over ;

Still, we have lived ! The vice was in its
place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have
worn

His clothes, have felt his money swell
my purse—

Do lovers in romances sin that way ?
Why, I was starving when I used to call

And teach you music, starving while you
plucked me

These flowers to smell !

Otti. My poor lost friend !

Seb. He gave me
Life, nothing less : what if he did re-
proach

My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right ? What was to wonder
at ?

He sat by us at table quietly—
Why must you lean across till our
cheeks touched ?

Could he do less than make pretence to
strike me ?

'Tis not for the crime's sake—I'd com-
mit ten crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out,
undone !

And you—O, how feel you ? feel you
for me ?

Otti. Well, then, I love you better
now than ever,

And best (look at me while I speak to
you)—

Best for the crime ; nor do I grieve, in
truth,

This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,

Falls off our crime ; this naked crime of
ours

May not, now, be looked over : look it
down, then !

Great ? let it be great ; but the joys it
brought,

Pay they or no its price ? Come : they
or it !

Speak not ! The Past, would you give
up the Past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime to-
gether ?

Give up that noon I owned my love for
you ?

The garden's silence ! even the single
bee

Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt ;
And where he hid you only could surmise

By some campanula's chalice set a-
swing :

Who stammered—' Yes, I love you ? '

Seb. And I drew
Back ; put far back your face with both
my hands

Lest you should grow too full of me—
your face

So seemed athirst for my whole soul and
body !

Otti. And when I ventured to receive
you here,

Made you steal hither in the mornings—
Seb. When

I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house
here,

Till the red fire on its glazed windows
spread

To a yellow haze ?

Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-
tree

Nipt by the first frost.

Seb. You would always laugh
At my wet boots : I had to stride thro'
grass

Over my ankles.

Otti. Then our crowning night !

Seb. The July night ?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald !
When the heaven's pillars seemed o'er-
bowed with heat,

Its black-blue canopy seemed let des-
cend

Close on us both, to weigh down each to
each,

And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came !

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you
recollect ;

Swift ran the searching tempest over-
head ;

And ever and anon some bright white
shaft

Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof, here
burnt and there,

As if God's messenger thro' the close
wood screen

Plunged and replunged his weapon at
a venture,

Feeling for guilty thee and me : then
broke

The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Seb. Yes !

Otti.—While I stretched myself upon
you, hands

To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth,
and shook

All my locks loose, and covered you with
them—

You, Sebald, the same you !

Seb. Slower, Ottima—

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently ! Love me !
Forgive me ! take not words, mere
words, to heart !

Your breath is worse than wine. Breathe
slow, speak slow !

Do not lean on me !

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, 'Let death come now ! 'tis
right to die !

Right to be punished ! nought completes
such bliss

But woe ! ' Who said that ?

Seb. How did we ever rise ?
Was 't that we slept ? Why did it end ?

Otti. I felt you,
Tapering into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your
humid lips—

(My hair is fallen now : knot it again !)

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now,
and now !

This way ? Will you forgive me—be
once more

My great queen ?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow ;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's
arbitress,

Magnificent in sin. Say that !

Seb. I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's
arbitress,

Magnificent . . .

[From without is heard the voice of
PIPPA, singing—

*The year 's at the spring,
And day 's at the morn ;
Morning 's at seven ;
The hill-side 's dew-pearled ;
The lark 's on the wing ;
The snail 's on the thorn ;
God 's in His heaven—
All 's right with the world !*

[PIPPA passes.

Seb. God 's in His heaven ! Do you
hear that ? Who spoke ?

You, you spoke !

Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl !
She must have rested on the step : we
give them

But this one holiday the whole year
round.

Did you ever see our silk-mills—their
inside ?

There are ten silk-mills now belong to
you.

She stoops to pick my double hearts—
ease . . . Sh !

She does not hear : call you out louder !

Seb. Leave me !
Go, get your clothes on—dress those
shoulders !

Otti. Sebald ?

Seb. Wipe off that paint. I hate
you !

Otti. Miserable !

Seb. My God ! and she is emptied of
it now !

Outright now !—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange
grace once ?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as
it likes,

No purpose holds the features up to-
gether,

Only the cloven brow and puckered
chin

Stay in their places—and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web !

Otti. Speak to me—speak not of me !

Seb.—That round great full-orbed
face, where not an angle

Broke the delicious indolence—all
broken !

Otti. To me—not of me !—ungrateful,
perjured cheat !

A coward, too : but ingrate 's worse
than all !

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing
lie !

Leave me ! Betray me ! I can see your
drift !

A lie that walks, and eats, and drinks !

Seb. My God !

Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-
blades—

I should have known there was no
blood beneath !

Otti. You hate me, then ? You hate
me, then ?

Seb. To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning ; and show
herself

Superior—Guilt from its excess, superior
To Innocence ! That little peasant's
voice

Has righted all again, Though I be
lost,

I know which is the better, never fear,

Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature, or trick ! I see what I have done,
Entirely now ! Oh, I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take
credit thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its
price !

I hate, hate—curse you ! God's in His
heaven !

Otti. —Me !

Me ! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill
me !

Mine is the whole crime—do but kill
me—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear
me speak—

I always meant to kill myself—wait,
you !

Lean on my breast—not as a breast ;
don't love me

The more because you lean on me, my own
Heart's Sebald ! There—there—both
deaths presently !

Seb. My brain is drowned now—
quite drowned : all I feel

Is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurrying-down within me, as of
waters

Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit :
There they go—whirls from a black, fiery
sea !

Otti. Not to me, God—to him be
merciful !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the Hill-side to Orcana. Foreign
Students of Painting and Sculpture,
from Venice, assembled opposite the
house of JULES, a young French
Statuary.*

First Student. Attention ! my own post
is beneath this window, but the pome-
granate clump yonder will hide three
or four of you with a little squeezing,
and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat
in the balcony. Four, five—who's a
defaulter ? We want everybody, for
Jules must not be suffered to hurt his
bride when the jest's found out.

Second Stud. All here ! Only our
poet's away—never having much meant
to be present, moonstrike him ! The airs
of that fellow, that Giovacchino ! He

was in violent love with himself, and had
a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so
unmolested was it,—when suddenly
a woman falls in love with him, too ;
and out of pure jealousy he takes him-
self off to Trieste, immortal poem and all
—where to is this prophetic epitaph
appended already, as Bluphocks assures
me—' *Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled
to death by butterflies.*' His own fault,
the simpleton ! Instead of cramp cou-
plets, each like a knife in your entrails,
he should write, says Bluphocks, both
classically and intelligibly.—*Aesculapius
an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs : Hebe's
plaster—One strip Cools your lip.
Phoebus' emulsion—One bottle Clears
your throttle. Mercury's holus—One box
Cures . . .*

Third Stud. Subside, my fine fellow !
If the marriage was over by ten o'clock,
Jules will certainly be here in a minute
with his bride.

Second Stud. Good !—Only, so should
the poet's muse have been universally
acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus
nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to
our literary dogs than the boy—Giovac-
chino !

First Stud. To the point, now.
Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer ? Oh,
—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called
down this piece of friendly vengeance on
Jules, of which we now assemble to
witness the winding-up. We are all
agreed, all in a tale, observe, when
Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by-
and-by : I am spokesman—the verses
that are to undeceive Jules bear my
name of Lutwyche—but each professes
himself alike insulted by this strutting
stone-squarer, who came singly from
Paris to Munich, and thence with a
crowd of us to Venice and Possagno
here, but proceeds in a day or two alone
again—oh, alone, indubitably !—to
Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take
up his portion with these dissolute,
brutalized, heartless bunglers !—So he
was heard to call us all : now, is Schramm
brutalized, I should like to know ? Am
I heartless ?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless ; for

suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters, now, you call his—I can't laugh at them.

Fourth Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

Fourth Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! 'He has been accused,' he writes, 'to have Canova's women about him, in stone, and the world's women beside him, in flesh; these being as much below, as those, above—his soul's aspiration: but now he is to have the real.' There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

First Stud. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody). Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—There follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—There's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus...

First Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules... a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolutely past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—'In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!' Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group: by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

Fifth Stud. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

First Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's 'hair like sea-moss'—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three lire an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it—a profound admirer bade him persevere—

would make herself known to him ere long—(Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely). And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, threetimes a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

Sixth Stud. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly! speak within yourselves!

Fifth Stud. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it! and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in!

Second Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

Sixth Stud. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

First Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

Sixth Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

First Stud. They go in—now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate—just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

✓
II.—*Noon. Over Orcana. The House of JULES, who crosses its threshold with PHENE: she is silent, on which JULES begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,

If you'll not die—so, never die! Sit here—

My work-room's single seat. I over-lean

This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn

Like an entire flower upward: eyes—lips—last

Your chin—no, last your throat turns—'tis their scent

Pulls down my face upon you! Nay, look ever

This one way till I change, grow you—I could

Change into you, Beloved!

You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all's true.
Thank God!

I have spoken: speak, you!

O, my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved, that's there in clay;

Yet how be carved, with you about the chamber?

Where must I place you? When I think that once

This room-full of rough block-work seemed my heaven

Without you! Shall I ever work again, Get fairly into my old ways again,

Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,

My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?

Will my mere fancies live near you, my truth—

The live truth, passing and repassing me, Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only, first,
See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?

Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps

Your letters next her skin : which drops
out foremost ?

Ah,—this that swam down like a first
moonbeam

Into my world !

Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy survey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds ; to return and
rest

On me, with pity, yet some wonder too—
As if God bade some spirit plague a
world,

And this were the one moment of sur-
prise

And sorrow while she took her station,
pausing

O'er what she sees, finds good, and must
destroy !

What gaze you at ? Those ? Books, I
told you of ;

Let your first word to me rejoice them,
too :

This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's
be the Greek

First breathed me from the lips of my
Greek girl !

My Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page
and page,

To mark great places with due gratitude ;
'He said, and on Antinous directed
A bitter shaft' . . . a flower blots out the
rest !

Again upon your search ? My statues,
then !

—Ah, do not mind that—better that will
look

When cast in bronze—an Almaign
Kaiser, that,

Swart-green and gold, with truncheon
based on hip.

This, rather, turn to ! What, unrecog-
nized ?

I thought you would have seen that here
you sit

As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse !
Recall you this, then ? 'Carve in bold
relief'—

So you commanded—'carve, against
I come,

A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-
branch :

"Praise those who slew Hipparchus,"
cry the guests,

"While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle
waves

As erst above our champions' : stand up,
all !"

See, I have laboured to express your
thought !

Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and
arms,

(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all
sides,

Only consenting at the branch's end
They strain toward) serves for frame to
a sole face,

The Praiser's, in the centre—who with
eyes

Sightless, so bend they back to light
inside

His brain where visionary forms throng
up,

Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip
of wine

From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor
crowns cast off,

Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts
approve,

Devoutly their unconquerable hymn !
But you must say a 'well' to that—say,
'well !'

Because you gaze—am I fantastic,
sweet ?

Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—
marbly

Even to the silence ! why, before I
found

The real flesh Phene, I injured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied
stuff

For better nature's birth by means of
art.

With me, each substance tended to one
form

Of beauty—to the human archetype. ✓
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take
the fruit,—

Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy
limbs,

Depending, nestled in the leaves; and
just

From a cleft rose-peach the whole
Dryad sprang.

But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!

From the soft-rinded smoothening facile
chalk

That yields your outline to the air's
embrace,

Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so
sure

To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—neath
my tools

More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug
from depths

In the earth's heart, where itself breeds
itself,

And whence all baser substance may be
worked;

Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal
there,

When o'er the sudden specks my chisel
trips?

—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale,
approach,

Lay bare those bluish veins of blood
asleep?

Lurks flame in no strange windings
where, surprised

By the swift implement sent home at
once,

Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?

Phene? what—why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still-
dilating eyes!

Ah, you will die—I knew that you would
die!

*PHENE begins, on his having long
remained silent.*

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it
must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need
I speak

Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to
mind

One half of it, besides; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.

Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not
try

To say the words Natalia made me learn,
To please your friends,—it is to keep
myself

Where your voice lifted me, by letting it
Proceed: but can it? Even you, per-
haps,

Cannot take up, now you have once let
fall.

The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as
we are:

Above the world.

You creature with the eyes!
If I could look for ever up to them,

As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done or suffering
borne,

Would drop down, low and lower, to the
earth

Whence all that's low comes, and there
touch and stay

—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is
myself,

Not so the shame and suffering; but
they sink,

Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered! Stay—'I love
you, love you' . . .

I could prevent it if I understood:
More of your words to me: was't in the
tone

Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only,
change

No more, and I shall find it presently
—Far back here, in the brain yourself
filled up.

Natalia threatened me that harm would
follow

Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant,
not you.

Your friends,—Natalia said they were
 your friends
 And meant you well,—because, I
 doubted it,
 Observing (what was very strange to see)
 On every face, so different in all else,
 The same smile girls like us are used to
 bear,
 But never men, men cannot stoop so low:
 Yet your friends, speaking of you, used
 that smile,
 That hateful smirk of boundless self-
 conceit
 Which seems to take possession of this
 world
 And make of God their tame confederate,
 Purveyor to their appetites . . . you
 know!
 But no—Natalia said they were your
 friends,
 And they assented while they smiled the
 more,
 And all came round me,—that thin
 Englishman
 With light, lank hair seemed leader of
 the rest;
 He held a paper—‘What we want,’ said he,
 Ending some explanation to his friends—
 ‘Is something slow, involved and
 mystical,
 To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his
 taste
 And lure him on, so that, at innermost
 Where he seeks sweetness’ soul, he may
 find—this!
 —As in the apple’s core, the noisome fly:
 For insects on the rind are seen at once,
 And brushed aside as soon, but this is
 found
 Only when on the lips or loathing
 tongue.’
 And so heread what I have got by heart—
 I’ll speak it,—‘Do not die, love! I am
 yours’ . . .
 Stop—is not that, or like that, part of
 words
 Yourself began by speaking? Strange
 to lose
 What cost such pains to learn! Is this
 more right?

*I am a painter who cannot paint;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,*

*In my brain, as poor a creature too:
 No end to all I cannot do!
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man, or hate a man
 Supremely: thus my love began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In its loveliest spot to abide,
 And just on the verge where I pitched
 my tent.
 I found Hate dwelling beside.
 (Let the Bridegroom ask what the
 painter meant,
 Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
 And further, I traversed Hate’s grove,
 In its hatefullest nook to dwell;
 But lo, where I flung myself prone,
 couched Love
 Where the deepest shadow fell.
 (The meaning—those black bride’s-
 eyes above.
 Not the painter’s lip should tell!)*

‘And here,’ said he, ‘Jules probably
 will ask,
 You have black eyes, love,—you are, sure
 enough,
 My peerless bride,—so, do you tell,
 indeed,
 What needs some explanation—what
 means this?’
 —And I am to go on, without a word—

*So, I grew wiser in Love and Hate,
 From simple, that I was of late.
 For once, when I loved, I would embrace
 Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and
 face
 Of her I loved, in one embrace—
 As if by mere love I could love im-
 mensely!
 And when I hated, I would plunge
 My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
 My foe’s whole life out, like a sponge—
 As if by mere hate I could hate in-
 tensely!
 But now I am wiser, know better the
 fashion
 How passion seeks aid from its
 opposite passion,
 And if I see cause to love more, or
 hate more
 Than ever man loved, ever hated,
 before—*

*And seek in the Valley of Love,
The spot, or the spot in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may the surest
reach*

*The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, or the Love
Of all Loves, in its Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.*

*I love most, when Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is sur-
prised*

*In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron
casque,*

*Hate grins through Love's rose-
braided mask,—*

*And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To wound thee, and not prick
The skin, but pierce to the quick—*

*Ask this, my Jules, and be answered
straight*

*By thy bride—how the painter
Lutwyche can hate!*

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche! who else? But all of them,
no doubt,

Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not
meet:

If I dreamed, saying this would wake me!

Keep
What's here, this gold—we cannot meet
again,

Consider—and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance, or hope, or care, or need of
it!

This—and what comes from selling
these, my casts

And books, and medals, except . . . let
them go

Together, so the produce keeps you safe,
Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance
(For all's chance here) I should survive
the gang

At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the
world is wide.

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA,
singing—

*Give her but a least excuse to love me!
When—where—*

*How—can this arm establish her above
me,*

*If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?*

*('Hist'—said Kate the queen;
But 'Oh'—cried the maiden, binding
her tresses,*

*'Tis only a page that carols unscen
Crumbling your hounds their messes!')*

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her
honour,*

My heart!

*Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled
a donor?*

*Merely an earth's to cleave, a sea's to
part!*

*But that fortune should have thrust all
this upon her!*

*('Nay, list,'—bade Kate the queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her
tresses,*

*'Tis only a page that carols unscen
Fitting your hawks their jesses!')*

[PIPPA passes.

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang
forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who
renounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still the peasants keep

Her memory; and songs tell how many
a page

Pined for the grace of one so far above
His power of doing good to, as a queen—

'She never could be wronged, be poor,'
he sighed,

'For him to help her!'

Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;

Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever
loves

Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
The blessing or the blest one, queen or

page,
Why should we always choose the page's

part?
Here is a woman with utter need of
me,--

I find myself queen here, it seems !
How strange !

Look at the woman here with the new
soul,

Like my own Psyche's,—fresh upon her
lips

Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make
bright,

Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly,
free

From taint or foul with stain, as outward
things

Fastened their image on its passiveness :
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die
again !

Shall to produce form out of unshaped
stuff

Be Art—and, further, to evoke a soul
From form, be nothing ? This new soul
is mine !

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that
do ?—save

A wretched dauber, men will hoot to
death

Without me, from their laughter ! Oh,
to hear

(God's voice plain as I heard it first,
before

They broke in with that laughter ! I
heard them

Henceforth, not God.
To Ancona—Greece—some isle !

I wanted silence only : there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er
one likes

In Art : the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains
to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad
dream !

Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's
friends,

What the whole world except our love—
my own,

Own Phene ? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some
isle

— 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'

With the sea's silence on it ? Stand
aside—

I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Shall I meet
Lutwyche,

And save him from my statue's meeting
him ?

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
Like a god going through his world
there stands

One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its
brow :

And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as
now !

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from Orcana to the Turret. Two or
three of the Austrian Police loitering
with BLUPHOCKS, an English vaga-
bond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks*¹. So, that is your Pippa,
the little girl who passed us singing ?
Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money
shall be honestly earned :—now, don't
make me that sour face because I bring
the Bishop's name into the business—
we know he can have nothing to do with
such horrors—we know that he is a
saint and all that a Bishop should be,
who is a great man besides. *Oh ! were
but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig,
Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every
tune a jig !* In fact, I have abjured all
religions ; but the last I inclined to, was
the Armenian—for I have travelled, do
you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia
Improper (so styled because there's
a sort of bleak hungry sun there,) you
might remark over a venerable house-
porch, a certain Chaldee inscription ;
and brief as it is, a mere glance at it
used absolutely to change the mood of
every bearded passenger. In they
turned, one and all ; the young and
lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the
aged and decrepit, with a sensible
alacrity,—'twas the Grand Rabbi's

— 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'

abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac—(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darri, Ferio*!) and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the Past, you'll say—*How Moses hocus-pocust Egypt's land with fly and locust*,—or, *How to Jonah sounded hurshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish*.—or, *How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam*. In no wise! *Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen Goods!* So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Heccate's supper, And never an obolus* . . . (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning pocket-full of *zwanzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

First Pol. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

Second Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts: never molest such a household, they mean well.

Blup. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Felippa—rhyming to *Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believ'at thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

Second Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger*! Leave this fooling, and look out: the afternoon's over or nearly so.

Third Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

Second Pol. Flourish all round—'Put all possible obstacles in his way; oblong dot at the end—'Detain him till further advices reach you; scratch at bottom—'Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above; ink-spirt on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—'Arrest him at once.' Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently, Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—Evening. Inside the Turret. LUIGI and his Mother entering.

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.
Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.

Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!

Hark—'Lucius Junius!' The very
ghost of a voice,
Whose body is caught and kept by . . .
what are those?

Mere withered wallflowers, waving over-
head?

They seem an elvish group with thin
bleached hair
Who lean out of their topmost fortress—
looking
And listening, mountain men, to what
we say,
Hands under chin of each grave earthy
face :
Up and show faces all of you !—‘ *All of
you !* ’

That ’s the king’s dwarf with the scarlet
comb ; now hark—
Come down and meet your fate ! Hark
—‘ *Meet your fate !* ’

Mother. Let him not meet it, my
Luigi—do not
Go to his City ! putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned ;
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush ! say A. writes, and B.
Mother. These A.’s and B.’s write for
effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while
good

Is silent ; you hear each petty injury,
None of his daily virtues ; he is old,
Quiet, and kind, and densely stupid.

Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves ?
Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed ; now, if A. tried and
failed,

I could not teach that : mine’s the
lesser task.

Mother. They visit night by night . . .

Mother. —You, Luigi ?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you
are ?

Luigi. Why not ? Oh, the one thing
you fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself ; at times—nay, even
as now
We sit, I think my mind is touched—
suspect

All is not sound : but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise ?
I know I am thus—so all is right again !
I laugh at myself as through the town
I walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy

Were suffering ; then I ponder—‘ I am
rich,

Young, healthy ; why should this fact
trouble me,

More than it troubles these ? ’ But it
does trouble !

No—trouble’s a bad word—for as I walk
There’s springing and melody and
giddiness,

And old quaint turns and passages of
my youth—

Dreams long forgotten, little in them-
selves—

Return to me—whatever may amuse me.
And earth seems in a truce with me, and
heaven

Accords with me, all things suspend
their strife,

The very cicale laugh ‘ There goes he,
and there !

Feast him, the time is short ; he is on
his way

For the world’s sake : feast him this
once, our friend ! ’

And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother !

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce
on him.

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that
I am right !

Mother. Mistrust your judgment,
then, of the mere means

Of this wild enterprise : say, you are
right,—

How should one in your state e’er bring
to pass

What would require a cool head, a cold
heart,

And a calm hand ? You never will
escape.

Luigi. Escape—to even wish that,
would spoil all !

The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of
mine,

To leave myself excuse for longer life—
Was not life pressed down, running o’er
with joy,

That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparerier feasted, make a longer
stay ?

I was put at the board-head, helped to all

At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves His world so much!

I can give news of earth to all the dead
(Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars

That had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—

Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims

That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,

Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—

May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer nights—

Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me! 'Tis true,—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,

Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreath

The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

Mother. See now: you reach the city, you must cross

His threshold—how?

Luigi. Oh, that's if we conspired!

Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—

But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me otherwise employed,

Yet prove of rarest merit here, here only.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve;
and yet

Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder

In search of a distorted ash?—it happens

The wry spoil'd branch's a natural perfect bow!

Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man

Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed up—

White satin here, to set off my black hair.

In I shall march—for you may watch your life out

Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;

More than one man spoils everything. March straight—

Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for. Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter) on

Thro' guards and guards—I have rehearsed it all

Inside the Turret here a hundred times! Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!

But where they cluster thickliest is the door

Of doors; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab

Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,

Whence he is bound and what's his business now.

Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:

Be prompt, how should he scream? Then, out with you!

Italy, Italy, my Italy!

You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I could dream

They got about me—Andrea from his exile,

Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave!

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism

The easiest virtue for a selfish man To acquire! He loves himself—and next, the world—

If he must love beyond,—but nought between:

As a short-sighted man sees nought midway

His body and the sun above. But you Are my adored Luigi—ever obedient

To my least wish, and running o'er with love—

I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him ?
—then go !

Luigi. Now do you ask me, or make sport of me ?

How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .

(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)

—Never by conquest but by cunning, for

That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well ?

Luigi. (Sure he 's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo : spring 's his confident,

And he lets out her April purposes !)

Or . . . better go at once to modern times.

He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand

But can't restate the matter ; that 's my boast :

Others could reason it out to you, and prove

Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night ?

Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now A morning-star. I cannot hear you, *Luigi !*

Luigi. 'I am the bright and morning-star,' God saith—

And, 'to such an one I give the morning-star !'

The gift of the morning-star—have I God's gift

Of the morning-star ?

Mother. Chiara will love to see That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

Luigi. True, mother. Well for those who live through June !

Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring pomps

Which triumph at the heels of the god June

Leading his revel through our leafy world.

Yes, Chiara will be here.

Mother. In June : remember, Yourself appointed that month for her coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo ?

Mother. The night-wind.

She must be grown—with her blue eyes upturned

As if life were one long and sweet surprise :

In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together The Titian at 'Treviso—there, again !

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA, singing—

*A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now :*

*And the king's locks curled
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and horn*

*Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born :
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(The Gods so loved him while he dreamed,)*

That, having lived thus long, there seemed

No need the king should ever die.

Luigi. No need that sort of king should ever die !

*Among the rocks his city was :
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens—robber-chief,*

Swarthy and shameless—beggar-cheat—

*Spy-prowler—or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground ;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen, thickset brows :
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,*

Who through some chink had pushed and pressed,

*On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught*

*At last there by the very God,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to
catch !*

*And these, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

Luigi. That king should still judge
sitting in the sun !

*His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,
Where the very blue had turned to
white.*

*'Tis said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forked tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge away;
But when he saw the sweepy hair,
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the God will hardly give to
wear*

*To the maiden who singeth, dancing
bare*

*In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch
lights,*

*At his wondrous forest rites,—
Beholding this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the
world begun !* [PIPPA passes.

Luigi. And such grace have they,
now that the world ends !

The Python in the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for
slaying him,

Lurkin bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won, in this late
time,

Which weakness makes me hesitate to
reach ?

'Tis God's voice calls, how could I stay ?
Farewell !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the Turret to the Bishop's
brother's House, close to the Duomo
S. Maria. Poor Girls sitting on the
steps.*

First Girl. There goes a swallow to
Venice—the stout seafarer !

Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish
for wings.

Let us all wish ; you, wish first !

Second Girl. I ? This sunset
To finish.

Third Girl. That, old—somebody I
know,

Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last
week—

Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and
mumbling

The while some folly about how well
I fare,

To be let eat my supper quietly :
Since had he not himself been late this
morning

Detained at—never mind where,—had
he not . . .

'Eh, baggage, had I not !'—

Second Girl. How she can lie !

Third Girl. Look there—by the
nails !

Second Girl. What makes your fin-
gers red ?

Third Girl. Dipping them into wine
to write bad words with,

On the bright table : how he laughed !

First Girl. My turn.

Spring's come and summer's coming :
I would wear

A long loose gown, down to the feet and
hands,

With plaits here, close about the throat,
all day :

And all night lie, the cool long nights, in
bed—

And have new milk to drink—apples to
eat,

Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . .
ah, I should say,

This is away in the fields—miles !

Third Girl. Say at once
You'd be at home : she'd always be at
home !

Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April

snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran : why,

fool,
They've rubbed out the chalk-mark of
how tall you were,

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dunghill of your garden !

First Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them ? well—
perhaps !

I would have done so : so I hope they
have !

A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall ;
They called it mine, I have forgotten
why,

It must have been there long ere I was
born :

Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps
o'erhead

Pricking the papers strung to flutter
there

And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse
long papers,

And the wasps eat them, prick them
through and through.

Third Girl. How her mouth twitches !
Where was I ?—before

She broke in with her wishes and long
gowns

And wasps—would I be such a fool !—
Oh, here !

This is my way—I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of
him—

(If you say, you love him—straight
'he'll not be gulled !')

'He that seduced me when I was a girl
Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair
like yours,

Brown, red, white,'—as the case may
be—that pleases !

See how that beetle burnishes in the
path—

There sparkles he along the dust ! and,
there—

Your journey to that maize-tuft's
spoilt at least !

First Girl. When I was young, they
said if you killed one

Of those sunshiny beetles, that his
friend

Up there, would shine no more that day
nor next.

Second Girl. When you were young ?
Nor are you young, that's true !
How your plump arms, that were, have
dropped away !

Why, I can span them ! Cecco beats you
still ?

No matter, so you keep your curious
hair.

I wish they'd find a way to dye our
hair

Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black : the men say they are sick
of black,

Black eyes, black hair !
Fourth Girl. Sick of yours, like
enough !

Do you pretend you ever tasted lam-
preys

And ortolans ? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there's no trusting him)
to slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

Second Girl. Why, there ! is not that
Pippa

We are to talk to, under the window,—
quick,—

Where the lights are ?
First Girl. No—or she would sing ;

For the Intendant said . . .
Third Girl. Oh, you sing first—

Then, if she listens and comes close . . .
I'll tell you,

Sing that song the young English noble
made,

Who took you for the purest of the
pure,

And meant to leave the world for you—
what fun !

Second Girl. [*Sings.*]

You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing :

June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now : some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like !

You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet :

Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death!—You'll love me yet !

Third Girl. [*To PIPPA who approaches.*]
Oh, you may come closer—we shall not
eat you ! Why, you seem the very
person that the great rich handsome
Englishman has fallen so violently in
love with ! I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—*Night. The Palace by the Duomo.*
MONSIGNOR, dismissing his Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks. I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* . . . ugh . . . ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather,—but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [*To the Intendant*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon. . . . 'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli. Fermo, and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3rd of December, I find him . . .

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3rd of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young

fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor, I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art; here's his letter,—'He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape—confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,'—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet, now, or a musician, (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel) transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours: first, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Mon. Ugo!

Inten. From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no

loud talk here: if once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. I would better not—I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forlì, (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name,) was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him...

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under Heaven: my own father... rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime; and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the off-scouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant, by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to

think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? you are going to punish me?

Mon.—Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in! How should I dare to say...

Inten. 'Forgive us our trespasses'?

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less, keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1, 2—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of that infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story?

The heir between the succeeding heir, and that heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes, and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever.

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

Mon. I see through the trick, catiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her or me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and

give me time to cross the Alps? 'Tis but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her! 'Tis as well settled once and for ever: some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

[From without is heard the voice of PIPPA singing—

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;*

There was nought above me, and nought below,

*My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds*

—Ay, and of beasts,—but words—our words,

Only so much more sweet?

*The knowledge of that with my life begun!
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the Seven and One,*

Like the fingers of my hand:

Nay, I could all but understand

Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;

*And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me!*

[PIPPA passes.

Mon. [Springing up.] My people—one and all—all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares... I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* quick, I say!

PIPPA'S Chamber again. *She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,

The mouse at her dray,

The grub in its tomb,

Wile winter away;

But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,

How fare they?

Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my Zanze—

'Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze'—

The summer of life's so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm,
pray, *She compares herself*

How fare they? *She is sure to*
No bidding me then to . . . what did she say?

'Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes

More like . . . (what said she?)—and less like canoes'—

How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert

Impudent staring women! it had done me,

However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:

No foreigner, that I can recollect,
'Amc, as she says, a month since, to inspect

Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings

Of English-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keeps his good intents,
We shall do better: see what next year brings!

I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you, perhaps, next year!

Bluph. . . something! I had caught the uncouth name

But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter

Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter

As ours; it were, indeed, a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame

The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The . . . ah, but—ah, but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right

To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:

While—not the worst of people's doings scare

The devil; so there's that proud look to spare!

Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for

I have just been the holy Monsignor!
And I was you too, Luigi's gentlemother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started

Out of the Turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he pass'd just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled

As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,

And now what am I?—tired of fooling!
Day for folly, night for schooling!

New year's day is over and spent,
Ill or well, I must be content!

Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
Wake up—here's a friend I've pluckt

you!

See—call this flower a heart's-case now!
And something rare, let me instruct you,

Is this—with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen,

While the leaves and parts that witness,
The old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain, unchanged, unmoved

now—
So, call this pampered thing improved

now!

Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—

'Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,'
Says he, 'Zanze from the Brenta,

I have made her gorge polenta
Till both cheeks are near as bouncing

As her . . . name there's no pronouncing!
See this heightened colour too—

For she swilled Breganze wine
Till her nose turned deep carmine—

'Twas but white when wild she grew!
And only by this Zanze's eyes

Of which we could not change the size,
The magnitude of what's achieved
Otherwise, may be perceived!'

Oh what a drear, dark close to my poor day!

How could that red sun drop in that black cloud!

Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,

Dispensed with, never more to be allowed !

Day's turn is over : now arrives the night's.

Oh, Lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throistle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights !

But at night, brother Howlet, far over
the woods,

Toll the world to thy chantry ;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods

Full complines with gallantry :
Then, owls and bats, crows and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry !

[*After she has begun to undress herself.*

Now, one thing I should like to really know :

How near I ever might approach all these

I only fancied being,* this long day !

—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so

As to . . . in some way . . . move them—
if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.

For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind
[*Sitting on the bedside.*

And broider Ottima's cloak's hem.

Ah, me and my important part with them,

This morning's hymnhalf promised when
I rose !

True in some sense or other, I suppose,
Though I passed by them all, and felt
no sign.

[*As she lies down.*

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns
say right.

All service is the same with God—

*With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we : there is no last nor first.*

[*She sleeps.*

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

A TRAGEDY

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistical consequence of what Voltaire termed 'a terrible event without consequences ;' and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing : since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (tolerable accounts of which are to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the details of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will, of Charles—the noble and right woman's-manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.—*R. B.*

LONDON, 1842.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia.

CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of Piedmont.

POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.

D'ORMEA, Minister.

SCENE.—The Council Chamber of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left and another to the right of the stage.

TIME, 1730-1.

FIRST YEAR 1730.—KING VICTOR

PART I

CHARLES, POLYXENA.

Cha. You think so? Well, I do not.

Pol. My Beloved,
All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:

This cannot last for ever—oh, may change

To-day, or any day!

Cha. —May change? Ah yes—
May change!

Pol. Endure it, then.

Cha. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now worse.

My father may . . . may take to loving me;

And he may take D'Ormea closer yet
To counsel him;—may even cast off her

—That bad Sebastian; but he also may . . . Or, no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?

Pol. Now, force me
From you!—me, close by you as if there gloomed

No D'Ormeas, no Sebastians on our path—

At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!

Cha. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure

We clasp hands now, of being happy once.

Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned

By the world's business that engrossed so much

My father and my brother: if I peered
From out my privacy,—amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two.

'Twas war, peace—France our foe, now
—England, friend—

In love with Spain—at feud with
Austria! Well—

I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh
for pride

In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
My curtain—'I am out of it,' I said—
When . . .

Pol. You have told me, Charles.

Cha. Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day,
just that!

Just so much sunshine as the cottager's child

Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother . . . had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured! not like me!

Pol. I know—

Cha. And Philip's mouth yet
fast to mine,

His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm
still round

My neck,—they bade me rise, 'for I was
heir

To the Duke,' they said, 'the right
hand of the Duke;'

Till then he was my father, not the Duke!
 So . . . let me finish . . . the whole intricate
 World's-business their dead boy was
 born to, I
 Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing
 he was,
 I, of a sudden, must be: my faults, my
 follies,
 —All bitter truths were told me, all at
 once,
 To end the sooner. What I simply
 styled
 Their overlooking me, had been con-
 tempt:
 How should the Duke employ himself,
 forsooth,
 With such an one, while lordly Philip
 rode
 By him their Turin through? But he
 was punished,
 And must put up with—me! 'Twas sad
 enough
 To learn my future portion and submit.
 And then the wear and worry, blame on
 blame!
 —For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-
 smells about,
 How could I but grow dizzy in their
 pent
 Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's
 look
 As they discussed my insignificance—
 She and my father, and I sitting by,—
 I bore; I knew how brave a son they
 missed:
 Philip had gaily passed state-papers o'er,
 While Charles was spelling at them pain-
 fully!
 But Victor was my father spite of that.
 'Duke Victor's entire life has been,' I
 said,
 'Innumerable efforts to one end;
 And, on the point now of that end's
 success,
 Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
 Where's time to be reminded 'tis his
 child
 He spurns?' And so I suffered—yet
 scarce suffered,
 Since I had you at length!
Pol. —To serve in place
 Of monarch, minister and mistress,
 Charles!

Cha. But, once that crown obtained,
 then was't not like
 Our lot would alter? 'When he rests,
 takes breath,
 Glances around, and sees who's left to
 love—
 Now that my mother's dead, sees I am
 left—
 Is it not like he'll love me at the last?'
 Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke's
 King:
 Could I—precisely then—could you
 expect
 His harshness to redouble? These few
 months
 Have been . . . have been . . . Polyxena,
 do you
 And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
 What would he have? What is't they
 want with me?
 Him with this mistress and this minister,
 —You see me and you hear him; judge
 us both!
 Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!
Pol. Endure, endure, Beloved! Say
 you not
 That he's your Father? All's so inci-
 dent
 To novel sway! Beside, our life must
 change:
 Or you'll acquire his kingerft, or he'll
 find
 Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
 I bear this—not that there's so much
 to bear.
Cha. You bear it? don't I know that
 you, tho' bound
 To silence for my sake, are perishing
 Piecemeal beside me? and how other-
 wise?
 —When every creephole from the
 hideous Court
 Is stopt; the Minister to dog me, here—
 The Mistress posted to entrap you,
 there!
 And thus shall we grow old in such a
 life—
 Not careless,—never estranged,—but
 old: to alter
 Our life, there is so much to alter!
Pol. Come—
 Is it agreed that we forego complaints
 Even at Turin, yet complain we here

At Rivoli ? 'Twere wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What's now
afoot,

I wonder ?—Not that any more's to
dread

Than every day's embarrassment—but
guess,

For me, why train so fast succeeded
train

On the high-road, each gayer still than
each ;

I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross ; such
pomp

Bodes . . . what now, Charles ? Can you
conceive ?

Cha. Not I.

Pol. A matter of some moment—

Cha. There's our life !

Which of the group of loiterers that
stared

From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,

In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it ?

Pol. Tush !

D'Ormea's contrivance !

Cha. Ay—how otherwise
Should the young Prince serve for the
old King's foil ?

—So that the simplest courtier may
remark,

'Twere idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-
stock !

Something, 'tis like, about that weary
business :

*[Pointing to papers he has laid
down, and which POLYXENA
examines.*

—Not that I comprehend three words,
of course,

After all last night's study.

Pol. The faint heart !

Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just
now

Its substance . . . (that's the folded
speech I mean,

Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs)

—What would you have ?—I fancied
while you spoke,

Some tones were just your father's.

Cha. Flattery !

Pol. I fancied so :—and here lurks,
sure enough,

My note upon the Spanish Claims !
You've mastered

The fief-speech thoroughly : this other,
mind,

Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,
Best read it slowly over once to me ;

Read—there's bare time ; you read it
firmly—loud

—Rather loud—looking in his face,—
don't sink

Your eye once—ay, thus ! ' If Spain
claims . . . ' begin

—Just as you look at me !

Cha. At you ! Oh, truly,

You have I seen, say, marshalling your
troops—

Dismissing councils—or, through doors
ajar,

Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow
chagrins

—Then radiant, for a crown had all at
once

Seemed possible again ! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit

fast,

In this sweet brow, nought could divert
me from,

Save objects like Sebastian's shameless
lip,

Or, worse, the clipt grey hair and dead
white face,

And dwindling eye as if it ached with
guile,

D'Ormea wears . . .

[As he kisses her, enter from the

KING's apartment D'ORMEA.

I said he would divert
My kisses from your brow !

D'O. [Aside.] Here ! So, King Victor
Spoke truth for once ; and who's or-
dained, but I,

To make that memorable ? Both in
call,

As he declared ! Were't better gnash
the teeth,

Or laugh outright now ?

Cha. [to POL.] What's his visit for ?

D'O. [Aside.] I question if they even
speak to me.

Pol. [to CHA.] Face the man ! he'll
suppose you fear him, else.

[*Aloud.*] The Marquis bears the King's command, no doubt.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Precisely!—If I threatened him, perhaps?

Well, this at least is punishment enough! Men used to promise punishment would come.

Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ah—

So anxious for his fate? [*Aloud.*] A word, my Prince, Before you see your father—just one word

Of counsel!

Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly—Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us! Well, sir? Be brief, however!

D'O. What? you know As much as I?—preceded me, most like. In knowledge! So! ('Tis in his eye, beside—

His voice: he knows it, and his heart's on flame

Already!) You surmise why you, myself,

Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more, Are summoned thus?

Cha. Is the Prince used to know, At any time, the pleasure of the King, Before his minister?—Polyxena, Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel Your presence—(smile not)—through the walls, and take

Fresh heart. The King's within that chamber?

D'O. [*Passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it, 'Spain!'*]

Pol. [*Aside to CHA.*] Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?

D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble you.

The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—let that pass!

But since it touches him and you, not me,

Bid the Prince listen!

Pol. [*to CHA.*] Surely you will listen!—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up his vest?

Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!

D'O. [*who has approached them, overlooks the other paper CHARLES continues to hold.*]

My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!

Sir, I must give you light upon those measures

--For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,

Mine too!

Cha. Release me! Do you gloze on me

Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world

You've made for me at Turin) your contempt?

--Your measures?—When was any hateful task

Not D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!

What post can I bestow, what grant concede?

Or do you take me for the King?

D'O. Not I! Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,

One, who in . . . shall I say a year—a month?

Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave

In his Sardinia,—Europe's spectacle, And the world's bye-word! What?

The Prince aggrieved That I excluded him our counsels?

Here

[*Touching the paper in CHARLES's hand.*]

Accept a method of extorting gold From Savoy's nobles, who must wring

its worth

In silver first from tillers of the soil, Whose hands again have to contribute brass

To make up the amount—there's counsel, sir!

My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—

Savoy's become a mass of misery And wrath, which one man has to meet

—the King:

You're not the King! Another counsel, sir!

Spain entertains a project (here it lies)

Which, guessed, makes Austria offer
that same King
Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;
Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be
forestalled,

Her offer follows; and he promises . . .
Cha.—Promises, sir, when he before
agreed

To Austria's offer ?

D'O. That's a counsel, Prince !
But past our foresight, Spain and Austria
(choosing

To make their quarrel up between them-
selves

Without the intervention of a friend)
Produce both treaties, and both
promises . . .

Cha. How ?

D'O. Prince, a counsel !—And
the fruit of that ?

Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
Together on their friend, blot out his
name,

Abolish him from Europe. So, take
note,

Here's Austria, and here's Spain to
fight against,

And what sustains the King but Savoy
here,

A miserable people mad with wrongs ?
You're not the King !

Cha. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up : all does clear up to
me !

D'O. Clears up ? 'Tis no such thing
to envy, then ?

You see the King's state in its length
and breadth ?

You blame me, now, for keeping you
aloof

From counsels and the fruit of counsels ?
—Wait

Till I explain this morning's business !

Cha. [*Aside.*] No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no ;
—The King's son, not to the King's
counsellor !

I will do something,—but at least retain
The credit of my deed ! [*Aloud.*] Then,
it is this

You now expressly come to tell me ?

D'O. This
To tell ! You apprehend me ?

Cha. Perfectly.

Further, D'Ormea, you have shown
yourself,

For the first time these many weeks and
months,

Disposed to do my bidding ?

D'O. From the heart !

Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait
his pleasure :

Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.

Acquaint the King !

D'O. [*Aside.*] If I 'scape Victor yet !

First, to prevent this stroke at me—if
not,—

Then, to avenge it ! [*To CHA.*] Gracious
sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

Cha. God, I forebore ! Which more
offends—that man

Or that man's master ? Is it come to
this ?

Have they supposed (the sharpest
insult yet)

I needed e'en his intervention ? No !
No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely ! Their step decides me.

Pol. How decides ?

Cha. You would be free from
D'Ormea's eye and hers ?

—Could fly the court with me and live
content ?

So—this it is for which the knights
assemble !

The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,
—For this !

Pol. What mean you ?

Cha. How ? you fail to catch
Their clever plot ? I missed it—but
could you ?

These last two months of care to incul-
cate .

How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit
To prove that, being dull, I might be
worse

Were I a king—as wretched as now
dull—

You recognize in it no winding up
Of a long plot ?

Pol. Why should there be a plot ?

Cha. The crown's secure now ; I
should shame the crown—

An old complaint ; the point is, how to
gain

My place for one more fit in Victor's eyes,
His mistress', the Sebastian's child.

Pol. In truth ?

Cha. They dare not quite dethrone
Sardinia's Prince :

But they may descant on my dulness till
They sting me into even praying them
For leave to hide my head, resign my
state,

And end the coil. Not see now ? In
a word,

They'd have me tender them myself my
rights

As one incapable :—some cause for that,
Since I delayed thus long to see their
drift !

I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.

Pol. - Pause ! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.

Cha. Think no ill of him !

Pol.—Nor think him, then, so shallow
as to suffer

His purpose be divined thus easily.

And yet—you are the last of a great
line ;

There 's a great heritage at stake ; new
days

Seemed to await this newest of the
realms

Of Europe :—Charles, you must with-
stand this !

Cha. Ah—

You dare not then renounce the splendid
court

For one whom all the world despises ?
Speak !

Pol. My gentle husband, speak I will,
and truth.

Were this as you believe, and I once sure
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . . could ? Oh, what happiness
it were—

To live, my Charles, and die, alone with
you !

Cha. I grieve I asked you. To the
presence, then !

By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King,
no doubt,

He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's
mouth

Teaching me in full council what I am.

—I have not breathed, I think, these
many years !

Pol. Why—it may be !—if he desire
to wed

That woman and legitimate her child—

Cha. You see as much ? Oh, let his
will have way !

You'll not repent confiding in me, Love ?
There 's many a brighter spot in Pied-
mont, far,

Than Rivoli. I'll seek him—or, sup-
pose

You hear first how I mean to speak my
mind ?

—Loudly and firmly both, this time
be sure !

I yet may see your Rhine-land—who
can tell ?

Once away, ever then away ! I breathe.

Pol. And I too breathe !

Cha. Come, my Polyxena !

KING VICTOR : PART II

*Enter KING VICTOR, bearing the regalia
on a cushion, from his apartment.
He calls loudly.*

D'Ormea !—for patience fails me, tread-
ing thus

Among the trains that I have laid,—my
knights,

Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,
My son,—D'Ormea, where ? Of this,
one touch—

[*Laying down the crown.*

This fireball to these mute, black, cold
trains—then !

Outbreak enough !
[*Contemplating it.*] To lose all, after all !

This—glancing o'er my house for ages—
shaped,

Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus
now—

Jerusalem, Spain, England—every
change

The braver,—and when I have clutched
a prize

My ancestry died wan with watching
for,

To lose it !—by a slip—a fault—a trick
Learnt to advantage once, and not un-
learnt

When past the use,—‘just this once more’ (I thought)

‘Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
And then away with trick!’ An oversight

I’d have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now!

There’s peace

At length; and I, to make the most of
peace,

Ventured my project on our people here,
As needing not their help—which
Europe knows.

And means, cold-blooded, to dispose
herself

(Apart from plausibilities of war)

To crush the new-made King—who
ne’er till now

Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot
of earth

And laughed at her: my name was left,
my sword

Left, all was left! But she can take, she
knows,

This crown, herself conceded . . .

That’s to try,

Kind Europe! My career’s not closed
as yet!

This boy was ever subject to my will—
Timid and tame—the fitter! D’Ormea,
too—

What if the sovereign’s also rid of thee
His primo of parasites?—Yet I delay!
D’Ormea! [*As D’ORMEA enters, the*

King seats himself.

My son, the Prince—attends he?

D’O. Sire,

He does attend. The crown prepared!
—it seems

That you persist in your resolve.

Vic. Who’s come?

The chancellor and the chamberlain?
My knights?

D’O. The whole Annunziata.—If, my
liege,

Your fortunes had not tottered worse
than now . . .

Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the
schedules? mine—

My son’s, too? Excellent! Only,
beware

Of the least blunder, or we look but
fools.

First, you read the Annulment of the
Oaths;

Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince
shall sign:

Then let Del Borgo read the Instru-
ment;

On which, I enter.

D’O. Sire, this may be truth;

You, sire, may do as you affect—may
break

Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remains worth saving!

Take

My counsel as I’ve counselled many
times!

What if the Spaniard and the Austrian
threat?

There’s England, Holland, Venice—
which ally

Select you?

Vic. Aha! Come, D’Ormea,—‘truth’

Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I’ve broken faith with Venice, Holland,

England.

—As who knows if not you?

D’O. But why with me

Break faith—with one ally, your best,
break faith?

Vic. When first I stumbled on you,
Marquis—’twas

At Mondovi—a little lawyer’s-clerk . . .

D’O. Therefore your soul’s ally!—
who brought you through

Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains
enough—

Who simply echoed you in these affairs—
On whom you cannot, therefore, visit

these

Affairs’ ill fortune—whom you’ll trust
to guide

You safe (yes, on my soul) in these
affairs!

Vic. I was about to notice, had you
not

Prevented me, that since that great
town kept

With its chicane D’Ormea’s satchel
stuffed,

And D’Ormea’s self sufficiently recluse,
He missed a sight,—my naval arma-
ment

When I burnt Toulon. How the skiff
exults

Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,

O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts—

And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot:—shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough
in turn?

Apply this: you have been my minister
—Next me—above me, possibly;—sad
post,

Huge care, abundant lack of peace of
mind;

Who would desiderate the eminence?
You gave your soul to get it—you'd
yet give

Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed
with me?

Whereas it cants you to another crest—
I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!

D'O. Ah, you so much despise me
then?

Vic. You, D'Ormea?
Nowise: and I'll inform you why.
A king

Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with
mine

When I thought proper. Of the tribe,
not one

(... Or wait, did Pianezze? ... ah, just
the same!)

Not one of them, ere his remonstrance
reached

The length of yours, but has assured me
(commonly,

Standing much as you stand,—or nearer,
say,

The door to make his exit on his speech)
—I should repent of what I did:

D'Ormea,
Be candid—you approached it when I
bade you

Prepare the schedules! But you stopped
in time

—You have not so assured me: how
should I

Despise you, then?

Enter CHARLES.

Vic. [*changing his tone.*] Are you
instructed? Do

My order, point by point! About it, sir!

D'O. You so despise me! [*Aside.*] One
last stay remains—

The boy's discretion there.

[*To CHARLES.*] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded—wholly in your interest—

To save you from this fate!

Cha. [*Aside.*] Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by
him?

Vic. [*to D'O.*] Apprise Del Borgo,
Spava, and the rest.

Our son attends them; then return.

D'O. One word!

Cha. [*Aside.*] A moment's pause and
they would drive me hence,
I do believe!

D'O. [*Aside.*] Let but the boy be firm!

Vic. You disobey?

Cha. [*to D'O.*] You do not disobey
Me, at least? Did you promise that or
no?

D'O. Sir, I am yours—what would
you? Yours am I!

Cha. When I have said what I shall
say, 'tis like
Your face will ne'er again disgust me.
Go!

Through you, as through a breast of
glass, I see.

And for your conduct, from my youth
till now,

Take my contempt! You might have
spared me much,

Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed
yourself—

That's over now. Go—ne'er to come
again!

D'O. As son, the father—father as,
the son!

My wits! My wits! [*Goes.*]

Vic. [*Seated.*] And you, what meant
you, pray,

By speaking thus to D'Ormea?

Cha. Let us not
Weary ourselves with D'Ormea! Those
few words

Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.

Vic. One called to manage kingdoms,
Charles, needs heart

To bear up under worse annoyances
Than D'Ormea seems—to me, at least.

Cha. [*Aside.*] Ah, good !
He keeps me to the point ! Then be it so.
[*Aloud.*] Last night, sire, brought me
certain papers—these—

To be reported on,—your way of late.
Is it last night's result that you demand ?

Vic. For God's sake, what has night
brought forth ? Pronounce
The . . . what's your word ?—result !

Cha. Sire, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt :—
a few

Lame thoughts, regard for you alone
could wring,
Lame as they are, from brains, like
mine, believe !

As 'tis, sire, I am spared both toil and
sneer.

These are the papers.

Vic. Well, sir ? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for
your result !

Cha. I never should have done great
things of course,

But . . . oh, my father, had you loved
me more !

Vic. Loved you ? [*Aside.*] Has
D'Ormea played me false, I
wonder ?

[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is
diffused—yourself

May overlook, perchance, your part in
it.

Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away.
I love, my mode, that subjects each and
all

May have the power of loving, all and
each,

Their mode : I doubt not, many have
their sons

To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long :
I have that crown, this chair, and
D'Ormea, Charles !

Cha. 'Tis well I am a subject then,
not you.

Vic. [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him
everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha !
I apprehend you : when all's said, you
take

Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance ?

Cha. —Do and ever did
So take it : 'tis the method you pursue
That grieves . . .

Vic. These words ! Let me express,
my friend,
Your thought. You penetrate what
I supposed

A secret. D'Ormea plies his trade be-
times !

I purpose to resign my crown to you.

Cha. To me ?

Vic. Now—in that chamber.
Cha. You resign

The crown to me ?

Vic. And time enough, Charles, sure ?
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for
that.

Cha. 'Tis I will speak : you ever
hated me,

I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself, and I remember
What I believed you, what you really
are,

And cannot bear it. What ! My life
has passed

Under your eye, tormented as you
know,—

Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to

prove me
A fool, I thought, and I submitted ;

now
You'd prove . . . what would you prove
me ?

Vic. This to me ?
I hardly know you !

Cha. Know me ? Oh, indeed
You do not ! Wait till I complain next
time

Of my simplicity !—for here's a sage—
Knows the world well—is not to be
deceived—

And his experience, and his Macchiavels,
D'Ormeas, teach him—what ?—that I,
this while,

Have envied him his crown ! He has not
smiled,

I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor
slept,

For I was plotting with my Princess
yonder !

Who knows what we might do, or might not do ?

Go, now—be politic—astound the world !

That sentry in the antechamber—nay,
The varlet who disposed this precious trap

[*Pointing to the crown.*

That was to take me—ask them if they think

Their own sons envy them their posts !
—Know me !

Vic. But you know me, it seems ; so,
learn in brief

My pleasure. This assembly is convened . . .

Cha. Tell me, that woman put it in your head—

You were not sole contriver of the scheme,

My father !

Vic. Now observe me, sir ! I jest
Seldom—on these points, never. Here,
I say,

The knights assemble to see me concede,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Cha. Farewell !
'Twere vain to hope to change this—I
can end it.

Not that I cease from being yours, when
sunk

Into obscurity. I'll die for you,
But not annoy you with my presence.

Sire,
Farewell ! Farewell !

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'O. [*Aside.*] Ha, sure he's changed
again—

Means not to fall into the cunning trap !
Then, Victor, I shall yet escape you,
Victor !

Vic. [*suddenly placing the crown upon
the head of CHARLES.*

D'Ormea, your King !

[*To CHARLES.*] My son, obey me !
Charles,

Your father, clearer-sighted than your-
self,

Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this
looks real !

My reasons after—reason upon reason
After—but now, obey me ! Trust in me !

By this, you save Sardinia, you save me !
Why, the boy swoons ! [*To D'O.*] Come
this side !

D'O. [*as CHARLES turns from him to
VICTOR.*] You persist ?

Vic. Yes—I conceive the gesture's
meaning. 'Faith,

He almost seems to hate you—how is
that ?

Be re-assured, my Charles ! Is't over
now ?

Then, Marquis, tell the new King what
remains

To do ! A moment's work. Del Borgo
reads

The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
Then I sign ; after that, come back to
me.

D'O. Sire, for the last time, pause !

Vic. Five minutes longer

I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—

And I'll so turn those minutes to account

That . . . Ay, you recollect me ! [*Aside.*]
Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading
That Act of Abdication !

[*As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to
precede him.*

Thanks, dear Charles !

[*CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.*

Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—
indeed

Just what I feared he wanted most.
Quite right,

This earnest tone—your truth, now, for
effect !

It answers every purpose : with that
look,

That voice,—I hear him : ' I began no
treaty,'

(He speaks to Spain,) ' nor ever dreamed
of this

You show me ; this I from my soul
regret ;

But if my father signed it, bid not me
Dishonour him—who gave me all,
beside : '

And, ' truth,' says Spain, ' 'twere harsh
to visit that

Upon the Prince.' Then come the
nobles trooping :

'I grieve at these exactions—I had cut
This hand off ere impose them; but
shall I

Undo my father's deed? '—And they
confer:

'Doubtless he was no party, after all;
Give the Prince time!'

Ay, give us time—but time!
Only, he must not, when the dark day
comes,

Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
We'll have no child's play, no des-
ponding-fits,

No Charles at each cross turn entreating
Victor

To take his crown again. Guard against
that!

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles!

No—Charles's counsellor!
Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

D'O. 'King Charles!' What then
may you be?

Vic. Anything!
A country gentleman that's cured of
bustle,

And beats a quick retreat toward
Chambery

To hunt and hawk, and leave you noisy
folk

To drive your trade without him. I'm
Count Remont—

Count Tende—any little place's Count!

D'O. Then, Victor, Captain against
Catinat,

At Staffarde, where the French beat you;
and Duke

At Turin, where you beat the French;
King, late,

Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, Sar-
dinia,

—Now, 'any little place's Count'—
Vic. Proceed!

D'O. Breaker of vows to God, who
crowned you first;

Breaker of vows to Man, who kept you
since;

Most profligate to me, who outraged
God

And Man to serve you, and am made pay
crimes

I was but privy to, by passing thus

To your imbecile son—who, well you
know,

Must—(when the people here, and
nations there,

Clamour for you, the main delinquent,
slipt

From King to—Count of any little place)
—Surrender me, all left within his

reach,—

I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—
See you on your return—(you will

return)—

To him you trust in for the moment...
Vic. How!

Trust in him? merely a prime-minister
This D'Ormea! How trust in him?

D'O. In his fear—
His love,—but pray discover for yourself

What you are weakest, trusting in!

Vic. Aha,
D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than
this

In your repertory? You know old
Victor—

Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I've
heard

Talkers who little thought the King so
close)

Felicitous, now, were't not, to provoke
him

To clean forget, one minute afterward,
His solemn act, and call the nobles back

And pray them give again the very
power

He has abjured!—for the dear sake of—
what?

Vengeance on you! No, D'Ormea: such
am I,

Count Tende or Count anything you
please,

—Only, the same that did the things you
say,

And, among other things you say not,
used

Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
I used, and now, since you will have it so,

Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the
midst,

You and your works. Why, what on
earth beside

Are you made for, you sort of ministers?
D'O.—Not left, though, to my fate!

Your witless son

Has more wit than to load himself with
lumber :

He foils you that way, and I follow you.

Vic. Stay with my son—protect the
weaker side !

D'O. Ay, be tossed to the people like
a rag,

And flung by them to Spain and Austria
—so

Abolishing the record of your part

In all this perfidy !

Vic. Prevent, beside,

My own return !

D'O. That 's half prevented now !
'Twill go hard but you find a wondrous
charm

In exile, to discredit me. The Alps—
Silk-mills to watch—vines asking vigi-
lance—

Hounds open for the stag—your hawk's
a-wing—

Brave days that wait the Louis of the
South,

Italy's Janus !

Vic. So, the lawyer's clerk

Won't tell me that I shall repent !

D'O. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent ?

Vic. When'er,
Sufficient time 's elapsed for that, you
judge !

[*Shouts inside, ' KING CHARLES.'*]

D'O. Do you repent ?

Vic. [*after a slight pause.*] . . . I've kept
them waiting ? Yes !

Come in—complete the Abdication, sir !
[*They go out.*]

Enter POLYXENA.

Pol. A shout ? The sycophants are
free of Charles !

Oh, is not this like Italy ? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this—
But just an ordinary fact ! Beside,
Here they've set forms for such proceed-
ings—Victor

Imprisoned his own mother—he should
know,

If any, how a son 's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty 's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily
king

And the unworthy subjects—be it so !

Come you safe out of them, my Charles !
Our life

Grows not the broad and dazzling life,
I dreamed

Might prove your lot—for strength was
shut in you

None guessed but I—strength which,
untrammelled once,

Had little shamed your vaunted an-
cestry—

Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,

Simplicity and utter truthfulness

—All which, they shout to lose !

So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save
Charles

Regret ?—the noble nature ! He 's not
made

Like the Italians : 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES enters crowned.

Oh, where 's the King's heir ? Gone :—
the Crown-prince ? Gone—

Where 's Savoy ? Gone :—Sardinia ?
Gone ! But Charles

Is left ! And when my Rhine-land
bowers arrive,

If he looked almost handsome yester-
twilight

As his grey eyes seemed widening into
black

Because I praised him, then how will he
look ?

Farewell, you stripped and whited mul-
berry trees

Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine !
Now I'll teach you my language—I'm
not forced

To speak Italian now, Charles ?
[*She sees the crown.*] What is this ?

Answer me—who has done this ?
Answer !

Cha. He !
I am King now.

Pol. Oh worst, worst, worst of all !
Tell me—what, Victor ? He has made
you King ?

What 's he then ? What 's to follow
this ? You, King ?

Cha. Have I done wrong ? Yes—for
you were not by !

Pol. Tell me from first to last.

Cha. Hush—a new world

Brightens before me ; he is moved away
—The dark form that eclipsed it, he
subsides

Into a shape supporting me like you,
And I, alone, tend upward, more and
more

Tend upward : I am grown Sardinia's
King.

Pol. Now stop : was not this Victor,
Duke of Savoy

At ten years old ?

Cha. . . . He was.

Pol. And the Duke spent
Since then, just four-and-fifty years in
toil

To be—what ?

Cha. King.

Pol. Then why unking himself ?

Cha. Those years are cause enough.

Pol. The only cause ?

Cha. Some new perplexities.

Pol. Which you can solve,
Although he cannot ?

Cha. He assures me so.

Pol. And this he means shall last—
how long ?

Cha. How long ?

Think you I fear the perils I confront ?
He's praising me before the people's
face—

My people !

Pol. Then he's changed—grown kind,
the King ?

Where can the trap be ?

Cha. Heart and soul I pledge !
My father, could I guard the crown you
gained,

Transmit as I received it,—all good else
Would I surrender !

Pol. Ah, it opens then
Before you—all you dreaded formerly ?
You are rejoiced to be a king, my
Charles ?

Cha. So much to dare ? The better ;
—much to dread ?

The better. I'll adventure though
alone.

Triumph or die, there's Victor still to
witness

Who dies or triumphs—either way,
alone !

Pol. Once I had found my share in
triumph, Charles,

Or death.

Cha. But you are I ! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I ten-
dered Heaven

A moment since. I will deserve the
crown !

Pol. You will. [*Aside.*] No doubt it
were a glorious thing

For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap !

Enter VICTOR.

'Tis he must show me.

Vic. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last ! Spare
thanks :

I know you, and Polyxena I know.

Here's Charles—I am his guest now—
does he bid me

Be seated ? And my light-haired, blue
eyed child

Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she
reigns.

Pol. Most grateful shall we now be,
talking least

Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must have
to say

To Charles.

Cha. Pray speak, sire !

Vic. 'Faith, not much to say--
Only what shows itself, once in the
point

Of sight. You are now the King :
you'll comprehend

Much you may oft have wondered at—
the shifts,

Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.

For what's our post ? Here's Savoy
and here's Piedmont,

Here's Montferrat—a breadth here,
a space there—

To o'er-sweep all these, what's one
weapon worth ?

I often think of how they fought in
Greece

(Or Rome, which was it ? You're the
scholar, Charles !)

You made a front-thrust ? But if your
shield, too,

Were not adroitly planted—somescrew'd
knave

Reached you behind ; and, him foiled,
straight if thong
And handle of that shield were not cast
loose,
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side ;
'scape these,
And reach your place of refuge—c'en
then, odds
If the gate opened unless breath enough
Was left in you to make its lord a speech.
Oh, you will see !

Cha. No : straight on shall I go,
Truth helping ; win with it or die with
it.

Vic. 'Faith, Charles, you're not made
Europe's fighting-man !
Its barrier-guarder, if you please. You
hold,

Not take—consolidate, with envious
French
This side, with Austrians that, these
territories

I held—ay, and will hold . . . which you
shall hold

Despite the couple ! But I've surely
earned

Exemption from these weary politics,
—The privilege to prattle with my son
And daughter here, tho' Europe wait
the while

Pol. Nay, sire,—at Chambery, away
for ever,
As soon you'll be, 'tis a farewell we bid
you !

Turn these few fleeting moments to
account !

'Tis just as though it were a death.

Vic. Indeed !

Pol. [*Aside.*] Is the trap there ?

Cha. Ay, call this parting—death !
The sacredder your memory becomes.
If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
My father ? No—that thought shall
ever urge me.

Vic. I do not mean . . .

Pol. [*who watches VICTOR narrowly
this while.*]

Your father does not mean
That you are ruling for your father's
sake :

It is your people must concern you
wholly

Instead of him. You meant this, sire ?
(He drops
My hand !)

Cha. That people is now part of me.

Vic. About the people ! I took certain
measures

Some short time since . . . Oh, I'm
aware you know

But little of my measures—these affect
Thenobles—we've resumed some grants,
imposed

A tax or two ; prepare yourself, in
short,

For clamour on that score : mark me :
you yield

No jot of what's entrusted you !

Pol. No jot
You yield !

Cha. My father, when I took the oath,
Although my eye might stray in search
of yours,

I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this
eminence

He moves me, here I keep, nor shall
concede

The meanest of my rights.

Vic. [*Aside.*] The boy's a fool !
—Or rather, I'm a fool : for, what's
wrong here ?

To-day the sweets of reigning—let to-
morrow

Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice
first.

Cha. Then why delay it for an
instant, sire ?

That Spanish claim, perchance ? And,
now you speak,

—This morning, my opinion was mature,
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in pro-
ducing

To one, I ne'er am like to fear, in future !
My thought is formed upon that Spanish
claim.

Vic. Betimes, indeed ! Not now,
Charles. You require
A host of papers on it.

D'O. [*coming forward.*] Here they
are.

[To CHA.] I was the minister and much beside—

Of the late monarch ; to say little, him I served : on you I have, to say e'en less,

No claim. This case contains those papers : with them

I tender you my office.

Vic. [*hastily.*] Keep him, Charles ! There's reason for it—many reasons : you Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there, —but

He's mixed up in this matter—he'll desire

To quit you, for occasions known to me : Do not accept those reasons—have him stay !

Pol. [*Aside.*] His minister thrust on us !

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Sir, believe, In justice to myself, you do not need E'en this commending : whatsoe'er might seem

My feelings toward you as a private man. They quit me in the vast and untried field

Of action. Though I shall, myself, (as late

In your own hearing I engaged to do) Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help Is necessary. Think the Past forgotten. And serve me now !

D'O. I did not offer you My services—would I could serve you, sire !

As for the Spanish matter . . .

Vic. But dispatch At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,

Before the living ! Help to house me safe

Ere you and D'Ormea set the world a-gape !

Here is a paper—will you overlook What I propose reserving for my needs ? I get as far from you as possible.

Here's what I reckon my expenditure. Cha. [*reading.*] A miserable fifty thousand crowns !

Vic. Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen !

Beside the exchequer happens . . . but find out

All that, yourself !

Cha. [*still reading.*] 'Count Tende'—what means this ?

Vic. Me : you were but an infant when I burst

Through the defile of Tende upon France. Had only my allies kept true to me !

No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take

Just as . . .

D'O. —The Marchioness Sebastian takes

The name of Spigno.

Cha. How, sir ?

Vic. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Fool ! All that Was for my own detailing. [*To CHARLES.*] That anon !

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Explain what you have said, sir !

D'O. I supposed The marriage of the King to her I named, Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks, Was not to be one, now he's Count.

Pol. [*Aside.*] With us The minister—with him the mistress !

Cha. [*to VICTOR.*] No— Tell me you have not taken her—that woman

To live with, past recall !

Vic. And where's the crime . . .

Pol. [*to CHARLES.*] True, sir, this is a matter past recall.

And past your cognizance. A day before, And you had been compelled to note this—now

Why note it ? The King saved his House from shame :

What the Count does, is no concern of yours.

Cha. [*after a pause.*] The Spanish business, D'Ormea !

Vic. Why, my son, I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,

Spoils everything : though I was overreached,

A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate

Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea, Inform the King !

D'O. [*without regarding VICTOR, and leisurely.*]

Thus stands the case with Spain :

When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

Vic. I tell you that stands over ! Let
that rest !

There is the policy !

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Thus much I
know,

And more—too much : the remedy ?

D'O. Of course !

No glimpse of one.

Vic. No remedy at all !

It makes the remedy itself—time makes
it.

D'O. [to CHARLES.] But if . . .

Vic. [still more hastily.] In fine, I shall
take care of that—

And, with another project that I have . . .

D'O. [turning on him.] Oh, since
Count Tende means to take again

King Victor's crown !—

Pol. [throwing herself at VICTOR's feet.]
E'en now retake it, sire !

Oh, speak ! We are your subjects both,
once more !

Say it—a word effects it ! You meant not,
Nor do mean now, to take it—but you
must !

'Tis in you—in your nature—and the
shame's

Not half the shame 'twould grow to
afterward !

Cha. Polyxena !

Pol. A word recalls the knights—
Say it !—What's promising and what's
the Past ?

Say you are still King Victor !

D'O. Better say

The Count repents, in brief !

[VICTOR rises.

Cha. With such a crime
I have not charged you, sire !

Pol. Charles turns from me !

SECOND YEAR 1731.—

KING CHARLES

PART I

Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'ORMEA.

—A pause.

Pol. And now, sir, what have you to
say ?

D'O. Count Tende . . .

Pol. Affirm not I betrayed you ; you
resolve

On uttering this strange intelligence
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I
reach

The capital, because you know King
Charles

Tarries a day or two at Evian baths

Behind me :—but take warning,—here
and thus

[Seating herself in the royal seat.

I listen, if I listen—not your friend.

Explicitly the statement, if you still
Persist to urge it on me, must proceed :
I am not made for aught else.

D'O. Good ! Count Tende . . .

Pol. I, who mistrust you, shall ac-
quaint King Charles,

Who even more mistrusts you.

D'O. Does he so ?

Pol. Why should he not ?

D'O. Ay, why not ? Motives, seek
You virtuous people, motives ! Say,
I serve

God at the devil's bidding—will that
do ?

I'm proud : our people have been
pacified,

Really I know not how—

Pol. By truthfulness.

D'O. Exactly ; that shows I had
nought to do

With pacifying them. Our foreign perils
Also exceed my means to stay : but here

'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued.
Count Tende

Completes a full year's absence : would
you, madam,

Have the old monarch back, his mistress
back,

His measures back ? I pray you, act
upon

My counsel, or they will be.

Pol. When ?

D'O. Let's think.

Home-matters settled—Victor's coming
now ;

Let foreign matters settle—Victor's
here :

Unless I stop him ; as I will, this way.

Pol. [reading the papers he presents.]

If this should prove a plot 'twixt
you and Victor ?

You seek annoyances to give pretext
For what you say you fear !

D'O. Oh, possibly !
I go for nothing. Only show King
Charles

That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please.

Pol. Half of your tale is true ; most
like, the Count

Seeks to return : but why stay you with
us ?

To aid in such emergencies ?

D'O. Keep safe
Those papers : or, to serve me, leave no
proof

I thus have counselled : when the Count
returns,

And the King abdicates, 'twill stead me
little

To have thus counselled.

Pol. The King abdicate !

D'O. He 's good, we knew long since—
wise, we discover—

Firm, let us hope :—but I'd have gone
to work

With him away. Well !

[*CHARLES without.*] In the Council
Chamber ?

D'O. All 's lost !

Pol. Oh, surely not King
Charles ! He 's changed—

That 's not this year's care-burthened
voice and step :

'Tis last year's step—the Prince's voice !
D'O. I know !

*Enter CHARLES—D'ORMEA retiring a
little.*

Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena !
Wish it me

The old way ! [*She embraces him.*
There was too much cause for that !

But I have found myself again ! What
news

At Turin ? Oh, if you but felt the load
I'm free of—free ! I said this year
would end

Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God !
Pol. How, Charles ?

Cha. You do not guess ? The day I
found

Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,
And how my father was involved in it,—

Of course, I vowed to rest or smile no
more

Until I freed his name from obloquy.
We did the people right—'twas much to
gain

That point, redress our nobles' grievance,
too—

But that took place here, was no crying
shame :

All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
Appeased the justly-angered Powers,
destroyed

The scandal, took down Victor's name
at last

From a bad eminence, I then might
breathe

And rest ! No moment was to lose.
Behold

The proud result—a Treaty, Austria,
Spain

Agree to—

D'O. [*Aside.*] I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.

Cha. Not a soul
Is compromised : the blotted Past 's a
blank :

Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned.
See !

It reached me from Vienna ; I remained
At Evian to dispatch the Count his
news ;

'Tis gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I : do I deserve to feel
Your warm white arms around me ?

D'O. [*Coming forward.*] He knows that ?

Cha. What, in heaven's name, means
this ?

D'O. He knows that matters
Are settled at Vienna ? Not too late !
Plainly, unless you post this very hour

Some man you trust (say, me) to
Chambery

And take precautions I acquaint you
with,

Your father will return here.

Cha. Are you crazed,
D'Ormea ? Here ? For what ? As well
return

To take his crown !

D'O. He will return for that.

Cha. [*to POLYXENA.*] You have not
listened to this man ?

Pol. He spoke

About your safety—and I listened.

[*He disengages himself from her arms.*]

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] What
Apprised you of the Count's intentions ?
D'O. Me ?

His heart, sire ; you may not be used to
read

Such evidence, however ; therefore read
[*Pointing to POLYXENA's papers.*]
My evidence.

Cha. [to POLYXENA.] Oh, worthy this
of you !

And of your speech I never have for-
gotten,

Though I professed forgetfulness ; which
haunts me

As if I did not know how false it was ;
Which made me toil unconsciously thus
long

That there might be no least occasion
left

For aught of its prediction coming true !
And now, when there is left no least
occasion

To instigate my father to such crime—
When I might venture to forget [I
hoped]

That speech and recognize Polyxena—
Oh, worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
That plague now ! D'Ormea at your ear,
his slanders

Still in your hand ! Silent ?

Pol. As the wronged are.
Cha. And pray, D'Ormea, since when
have you presumed

To spy upon my father ? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when ?

D'O. The when, and where, and how,
belong

To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in
such.

You oftentimes serve yourself—I'd serve
you here :

Use makes me not so squeamish. In
a word,

Since the first hour he went to Cham-
berly,

Of his seven servants, five have I
suborned.

Cha. You hate my father ?
D'O. Oh, just as you will !
[*Looking at POLYXENA.*]

A minute since, I loved him—hate him,
now !

What matters ?—If you ponder just one
thing :

Has he that Treaty ?—He is setting
forward

Already. Are your guards here ?
Cha. Well for you
They are not ! [To *POL.*] Him I knew of
old, but you—

To hear that pickthank, further his
designs ! [To *D'O.*]
Guards ?—were they here, I'd bid them,
for your trouble,
Arrest you.

D'O. Guards you shall not want.
I lived
The servant of your choice, not of your
need.

You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge—its duty
Would bid me press you read those
documents.

Here, sire ! [*Offering his badge of office.*]
Cha. [*taking it.*] The papers also ! Do
you think
I dare not read them ?

Pol. Read them, sir !
Cha. They prove,
My father, still a month within the year
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,
Means to resume his crown ? They shall
prove that,
Or my best dungeon . . .

D'O. Even say, Chamberly !
'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.
Cha. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go
there !

Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us
two ! Do say,
You'll see the falsehood of the charges
proved !
Do say, at least, you wish to see them
proved
False charges—my heart's love of other
times !

Pol. Ah, Charles !
Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Precede me, sir !
D'O. And I'm at length
A martyr for the truth ! No end, they say,

Of miracles. My conscious innocence !

[*As they go out, enter—by the middle door, at which he pauses—*VICTOR.

Vic. Sure I heard voices ? No !

Well, I do best

To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.

The old room ! Nothing changed !—So near my seat,

D'Ormea ? [*Pushing away the stool which is by the KING's chair.*

I want that meeting over first, I know not why. Tush, D'Ormea won't be slow

To hearten me, the supple knave ! That burst

Of spite so eased him ! He'll inform me . . .

What ?

Why come I hither ? All's in rough—let all

Remain rough ; there's full time to draw back—nay,

There's nought to draw back from, as yet ; whereas,

If reason should be, to arrest a course Of error—reason good, to interpose And save, as I have saved so many times. Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,

Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—

Now is the time,—or now, or never. 'Faith,

This kind of step is pitiful—not due To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because

He's from his capital ! Oh, Victor ! Victor !

But thus it is. The age of crafty men Is loathsome ; youth contrives to carry off

Dissimulation ; we may intersperse Extenuating passages of strength, Ardour, vivacity, and wit—may turn E'en guile into a voluntary grace :—But one's old age, when graces drop away

And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—

Ah, loathsome !

Not so—or why pause I ? Turin Is mine to have, were I so minded, for

The asking ; all the army's mine—I've witnessed

Each private fight beneath me ; all the court's

Mine too ; and, best of all, my D'Ormea's still

His D'Ormea ; no ! There's some grace clinging yet.

Had I decided on this step, ere midnight I'd take the crown.

No ! Just this step to rise

Exhausts me ! Here am I arrived : the rest

Must be done for me. Would I could sit here

And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque

Of the old King, crownless, grey hairs and hot blood,—

The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,

They say,—the eager mistress with her taunts,—

And the sad earnest wife who motions me

Away—ay, there she knelt to me ! E'en yet

I can return and sleep at Chambery A dream out. Rather shake it off at Turin,

King Victor ! Is 't to Turin—yes, or no ? 'Tis this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,

Lighted like life, but silent as the grave, That disconcerts me ! There the change must strike !

No silence last year ! some one flung doors wide

(Those two great doors which scrutinize me now)

And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,

Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit ; Men saw me safe forth—put me on my road :

That makes the misery of this return ! Oh, had a battle done it ! Had I dropped,

Haling some battle, three entire days old,

Hither and thither by the forehead—dropped

In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—

Spurned on its horns or underneath its
hooves,
When the spent monster went upon its
knees
To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—
I, Victor,
Sole to have stood up against France,
beat down
By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,
A flying hell of horse and foot and
guns
Over me, and all 's lost, for ever lost,
There 's no more Victor when the world
wakes up !
Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as
whole days
After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood)—
there creeps
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face out-
worn for wounds,
Is stumbling on from frontier town to
town,
Begging a pittance that may help him
find
His Turin out ; what scorn and laughter
follow
The coin you fling into his cap ! and
last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd
about the midst
Of the market-place, where takes the
old king breath
Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-
gate
Wide ope !
To Turin, yes or no—or no ?

Re-enter CHARLES with papers.

Cha. Just as I thought ! A miserable
falsehood
Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement ! A
few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o'er slaves
By means that suit their natures !
[*Tearing them.*] Thus they shake
My faith in Victor !
[*Turning, he discovers VICTOR.*

Vic. [after a pause.] Not at Evian,
Charles ?
What 's this ? Why do you run to close
the doors ?
No welcome for your father ?
Cha. [Aside.] Not his voice !
What would I give for one imperious
tone
Of the old sort ! That 's gone for ever.
Vic. Must
I ask once more . . .
Cha. No—I concede it, sir !
You are returned for . . . true, your
health declines—
True, Chambery 's a bleak unkindly spot ;
You'd choose one fitter for your final
lodge—
Veneria—or Moncagliet—ay, that 's
close,
And I concede it.
Vic. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter
Dated from Evian baths . . .
Cha. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied
The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your
presence
Would only disconcert me—
Vic. Charles ?
Cha. —Me—set
For ever in a foreign course to yours,
And . . .
Sir, this way of wile were good
to catch,
But I have not the sleight of it. The
truth !
Though I sink under it ! What brings
you here ?
Vic. Not hope of this reception,
certainly,
From one who'd scarce assume a
stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfulest calamity !
Cha. —You mean,
yes,
I should speak otherwise ! But turn not
that
To jesting ! Sir, the truth ! Your health
declines ?
Is aught deficient in your equipage ?

Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs

At petty discontents; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit.
Speak!

Vic. [Aside.] Here is the grateful,
much-professing son
Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake

I think to waive my plans of public good!
[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more

My crown, were so disposed to plague myself—

What would be warrant for this bitterness?

I gave it—grant, I would resume it—well?

Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown:

And as you then intended . . .

Vic. Fool! What way
Could I intend or not intend? As man,
With a man's will, when I say 'I intend,'

I can intend up to a certain point,
No further. I intended to preserve
The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:
And if events arise demonstrating
The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like

To lose it . . .

Cha. Keep within your sphere
and mine!

It is God's province we usurp on, else.
Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk

By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong;

All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there's my truth.

Vic. Truth, boy, is here—within my breast; and in

Your recognition of it, truth is, too;
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing

With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,

—In its success, this falsehood turns, again,

Truth for the world! But you are right: these themes

Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme:

I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,

What I must bring about: I interpose
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight—

To hold what he is nearly letting go—
Confirm his title—add a grace, perhaps.

There's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
And taken back, some years since—till I give

That island with the rest, my work's half done.

For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .

Cha. Our sakes are one—and that, you could not say,

Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith;—a year has wrought an age's change:

This people's not the people now, you once

Could benefit; nor is my policy
Your policy.

Vic. [with an outburst.] I know it!
You undo

All I have done—my life of toil and care!

I left you this the absolutest rule
In Europe—do you think I will sit still

And see you throw all power off to the people—

See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,
Join in the mad and democratic whirl

Whereto I see all Europe haste full-tide?
England casts off her kings; France

mimics England:
This realm I hoped was safe! Yet here

I talk,
When I can save it, not by force alone.

But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,

Fasten upon my disobedient . . .
[*Recollecting himself.*] Surely

I could say this—if minded so—my son?
Cha. You could not! Bitterer curses than your curse

Have I long since denounced upon
myself

If I misused my power. In fear of these
I entered on those measures—will abide
By them: so, I should say, Count
Tende . . .

Vic. No !

But no ! But if, my Charles, your—
more than old—

Half-foolish father urged these argu-
ments,

And then confessed them futile, but
said plainly

That he forgot his promise, found his
strength

Fail him, had thought at savage Cham-
bery

Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had
built

When he was fortunate and young—
Cha. My father !

Vic. Stay yet—and if he said he could
not die

Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that
binds

Your brain up, whole, sound, and im-
pregnable,

Creating kingliness—the Sceptre, too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it,
back would beat

Invaders—and the golden Ball which
throbs

As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as you
may choose !

—If I must totter up and down the
streets

My sires built, where myself have intro-
duced

And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
The civil and the military arts !

Stay, Charles—I see you letting me
pretend

To live my former self once more—
King Victor,

The venturous yet politic—they style
me

Again, the Father of the Prince—friends
wink

Good-humouredly at the delusion you

So sedulously guard from all rough
truths

That else would break upon the dotage !
—You—

Whom now I see preventing my old
shame—

I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is't not in your breast my brow is
hid ?

Is not your hand extended ? Say you
not . . .

Enter D'ORMEA, leading in POLYXENA.

Pol. [advancing and withdrawing
CHARLES—to VICTOR.]

In this conjuncture, even, he would
say—

(Though with a moistened eye and
quivering lip)

The suppliant is my father—I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him
fling

His well-earned fame away : there must
not follow

Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
So absolute : no enemy shall learn,

He thrust his child 'twixt danger and
himself,

And, when that child somehow stood
danger out,

Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin
Charles

—Body, that's much,—and soul, that's
more—and realm,

That's most of all ! No enemy shall
say . . .

D'O. Do you repent, sir ?

Vic. [resuming himself.] D'Ormea ?
This is well !

Worthily done, King Charles, craftily
done !

Judiciously you post these, to o'er-hear
The little your importunate father
thrusts

Himself on you to say ! Ay, they'll
correct

The amiable blind facility
You showed in answering his peevish
suit.

What can he need to sue for ? Bravely,
D'Ormea,

Have you fulfilled your office : but for
you,

The old Count might have drawn some
few more livres

To swell his income ! Had you, Lady,
missed

The moment, a permission would be
granted

To build afresh my ruinous old pile !

But you remembered properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I
gave

Nearly as much away—to reap the
fruits

I might have looked for !

Cha. Thanks, sir : degrade me,
So you remain yourself. Adieu !

Vic. I'll not

Forget it for the future, nor presume

Next time to slight such mediators !
Nay—

Had I first moved them both to inter-
cede,

I might secure a chamber in Moncaglior
—Who knows ?

Cha. Adieu !

Vic. You bid me this adieu
With the old spirit ?

Cha. Adieu !

Vic. Charles—Charles !

Cha. Adieu !

[VICTOR goes.]

Cha. You were mistaken, Marquis,
as you hear !

'Twas for another purpose the Count
came.

The Count desires Moncaglior. Give
the order !

D'O. [*leisurely.*] Your minister has
lost your confidence,

Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would . . .

Cha. [*flinging his badge back.*] Be still
the minister !

And give a loose to your insulting
joy—

It irks me more thus stifled than ex-
pressed.

Loose it !

D'O. There's none to loose, alas !—
I see . . .

I never am to die a martyr.

Pol. Charles !

Cha. No praise, at least, Polyxena—
no praise !

KING CHARLES ; PART II.

*D'ORMEA seated, folding papers he has
been examining.*

This at the last effects it : now, King
Charles

Or else King Victor—that's a balance :
but now

For D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either
turn

O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A
point to solve,

My masters—moralists—what'er your
style !

When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,

Impart to me among the rest ! No
matter.

Prompt are the righteous ever with their
rede

To us the wicked—lesson them this once !
For safe among the wicked are you set,

D'Ormea. We lament life's brevity,
Yet quarter c'en the threescore years

and ten,
Nor stick to call the quarter roundly

'life.'

D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty
years ;

A tree so long was stunted ; afterward,
What if it grew, continued growing, till

No fellow of the forest equalled it ?
'Twas a shrub then—a shrub it still

must be :
While forward saplings, at the outset

checked,
In virtue of that first sprout keep their

style
Amid the forest's green fraternity.

Thus I shoot up—to surely get lopped
down,

And bound up for the burning. Now
for it !

*Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with
Attendants.*

D'O. [*rises.*] Sire, in the due discharge
of this my office—

This enforced summons of yourself from
Turin,

And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,

So much that wounds . . .
Cha. Well, sir ?

D'O. —That I, perchance,
May utter, also, what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less
irksome now.

Cha. What would you utter ?

D'O. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event : for you I
grieve—

E'en grieve for . . .

Cha. Tush, another time for talk !
My kingdom is in imminent danger ?

D'O. Let
The Count communicate with France
its King,
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for
this,

Though for no other war.

Cha. First for the levies :
What forces can I muster presently ?

[D'ORMEA delivers papers which
CHARLES inspects.]

Cha. Good—very good. Montorio . . .
how is this ?

—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers ?

D'O. Since his land has been relieved
From double impost, this he manages :
But under the late monarch . . .

Cha. Peace. I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of
his.

D'O. Count Spava means to head his
troops himself.
Something to fight for now ; ' whereas,'
says he,

' Under the Sovereign's father ' . . .

Cha. It would seem
That all my people love me.

D'O. Yes.

[To POLYXENA while CHARLES
continues to inspect the papers.]

A temper
Like Victor's may avail to keep a state ;
He terrifies men and they fall not off ;
Good to restrain ; best, if restraint were
all :

But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such away. Our King's begins pre-
cisely there.

For to suggest, impel, and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may
slight,

In time of peace, the King who brought
them peace :

In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more
than fear.

They love you, sire !

Cha. [to Attendants.] Bring the regalia
forth.

Quit the room. And now, Marquis,
answer me—

Why should the King of France invade
my realm ?

D'O. Why ? Did I not acquaint your
Majesty

An hour ago ?

Cha. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'O. Because, sire, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his
crown

At any risk ; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.

Cha. And your reason
For saying this ?

D'O. [Aside.] Ay, just his father's
way !

[To CH.] The Count wrote yesterday to
your forces' Chief,

Rhebinder—made demand of help—

Cha. To try
Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood : aught
else ?

D'O. Receiving a refusal,—some
hours after,

The Count called on Del Bergo to deliver
The Act of Abdication : he refusing,

Or hesitating, rather—

Cha. What ensued ?

D'O. At midnight, only two hours
since, at Turin,

He rode in person to the citadel

With one attendant, to the Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi,

open—

Admit him.

Cha. For a purpose I divine.

These three were faithful, then ?

D'O. They told it me :

And I—

Cha. Most faithful—

D'O. Tell it you—with this,
Moreover, of my own : if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will
be

Upon his road to France for succour.

Cha. Good!

You do your duty, now, to me your monarch

Fully, I warrant?—have, that is, your project

For saving both of us disgrace, past doubt?

D'O. I give my counsel,—and the only one.

A month since, I besought you to employ Restraints which had prevented many a pang:

But now the harsher course must be pursued.

These papers, made for the emergency, Will pain you to subscribe: this is a list Of those suspected merely—men to watch;

This—of the few of the Count's very household.

You must, however reluctantly, arrest; While here's a method of remonstrance—sure

Not stronger than the case demands—to take

With the Count's self.

Cha. Deliver those three papers.

Pol. [*while CHARLES inspects them—to D'ORMEA.*]

Your measures are not over-harsh, sir: France

Will hardly be deterred from coming hither

By these.

D'O. What good of my proposing measures

Without a chance of their success? E'en these,

Hear what he'll say at my presenting.

Cha. [*who has signed them.*] There!

About the warrants! You've my signature.

What turns you pale? I do my duty by you

In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'O. [*reading them separately.*] Arrest the people I suspected merely?

Cha. Did you suspect them?

D'O. Doubtless: but—but—sire, This Forquieri's governor of Turin; And Rivarol and he have influence over Half of the capital.—Rabella, too?

Why, sire—

Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me!

D'O. [*still reading.*] You bid me Incarcerate the people on this list?

Sire—

Cha. Why, you never bade arrest those men,

So close related to my father too,

On trifling grounds?

D'O. Oh, as for that, St. George, President of Chambery's senators, Is hatching treason! but—

[*Still more troubled.*] Sire, Count Cumiane Is brother to your father's wife! What's here?

Arrest the wife herself?

Cha. You seem to think it A venial crime to plot against me. Well?

D'O. [*who has read the last paper.*]

Wherefore am I thus ruined?

Why not take

My life at once? This poor formality

Is, let me say, unworthy you! Prevent it,

You, madam! I have served you, am prepared

For all disgraces—only, let disgrace

Be plain, be proper—proper for the world

To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!

Take back your warrant—I will none of it.

Cha. Here is a man to talk of fickleness!

He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;

I bid him . . .

D'O. Not you! Were he trebly false, You do not bid me . . .

Cha. Is't not written there?

I thought so: give—I'll set it right.

D'O. Is it there?

Oh, yes—and plain—arrest him—now—drag here

Your father! And were all six times as plain,

Do you suppose I trust it?

Cha. Just one word!

You bring him, taken in the act of flight, Or else your life is forfeit.

D'O. Ay, to Turin

I bring him? And to-morrow?

Cha. Here and now !
 The whole thing is a lie—a hateful lie—
 As I believed and as my father said.
 I knew it from the first, but was compelled
 To circumvent you ; and the crafty
D'Ormea,
 That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
 The miserable sower of such discord
 'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last !
 Oh, I see ! you arrive—this plan of
 yours,
 Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
 A sick, old, peevish man—wings hasty
 speech
 And ill-considered threats from him ;
 that's noted ;
 Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
 In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
 The day-by-day report of your paid
 creatures—
 And back you come—all was not ripe,
 you find,
 And, as you hope, may keep from
 ripening yet—
 But you were in bare time ! Only,
 'twere best
 I never saw my father—these old men
 Are potent in excuses—and, meanwhile,
D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without !
Pol. Charles—
Cha. Ah, no question !
 You're for *D'Ormea* too !
 You'd have me eat and drink, and
 sleep, live, die
 With this lie coiled about me, choking
 me !
 No, no—he's caught ! [*to D'ORMEA.*]
 You venture life, you say,
 Upon my father's perfidy ; and I
 Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
 The chains of testimony you thus wind
 About me ; though I do—do from my
 soul
 Discredit them ; still I must authorize
 These measures—and I will. *Perugia* !
 [*Many Officers enter.*] Count—
 You and Solar, with all the force you
 have,
 Are at the Marquis's orders : what he bids,

Implicitly perform ! You are to bring
 A traitor here—the man that's likeliest
 one
 At present, fronts me ; you are at his
 beck
 For a full hour ; he undertakes to show
 you
 A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
 Return with him, and, as my father lives,
 He dies this night ! The clemency you
 blame
 So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised
 That I've abjured.
 [*To D'ORMEA.*] Now, sir, about the work !
 'To save your king and country ! Take
 the warrant !
D'O. You hear the Sovereign's mandate,
 Count *Perugia* ?
 Obey me ! As your diligence, expect
 Reward ! All follow to *Monteaglier* !
Cha. [*in great anguish.*] *D'Ormea* !
 [*D'ORMEA goes.*]
 He goes, lit up with that appalling
 smile !
 [*To POLYXENA after a pause.*
 At least you understand all this ?
Pol. These means
 Of our defence—these measures of precaution ?
Cha. It must be the best way. I
 should have else
 Withered beneath his scorn.
Pol. What would you say ?
Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to
 keep the crown,
Polyxena ?
Pol. You then believe the story
 In spite of all—that Victor's coming ?
Cha. Believe it ?
 I know that he is coming—feel the
 strength
 That has upheld me leave me at his
 coming !
 'Twas mine, and now he takes his own
 again.
 Some kinds of strength are well enough
 to have ;
 But who's to have that strength ? Let
 my crown go !
 I meant to keep it—but I cannot—
 cannot !
 Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the
 first . . .

See if he would not be the first to taunt
me

With having left his kingdom at a
word—

With letting it be conquered without
stroke—

With . . . no—no—'tis no worse than
when he left it,

I've just to bid him take it, and, that
over,

We'll fly away—fly—for I loathe this
Turin,

This Rivoli, all titles loathe, and state.

We'd best go to your country—unless
God

Send I die now !

Pol. Charles, hear me !

Cha. —And again

Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take
me

Out of this woe ! Yes, do speak—and
keep speaking !

I would not let you speak just now, for
fear

You'd counsel me against him : but
talk, now,

As we two used to talk in blessed times :
Bid me endure all his caprices ; take me
From this mad post above him !

Pol. I believe

We are undone, but from a different
cause.

All your resources, down to the least
guard,

Are now at D'Ormea's beck. What if,
the while,

He act in concert with your father ? We
Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—

Where find a better place for them ?

Cha. [*pacing the room.*] And why
Does Victor come ? To undo all that's
done !

Restore the Past—prevent the Future !
Seat

His mistress in your seat, and place in
mine

. . . Oh, my own people, whom will you
find there,

To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
To hold up with your hands ? Whom ?

One that's false—

False—from the head's crown to the
foot's sole, false !

The best is, that I knew it in my heart
From the beginning, and expected this,
And hated you, Polyxena, because

You saw thro' him, though I too saw
thro' him,

Saw that he meant this while he crowned
me, while

He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed
my brow.

I saw—

Pol. But if your measures take effect,
And D'Ormea's true to you ?

Cha. Then worst of all !

I shall have loosed that callous wretch on
him !

Well may the woman taunt him with
his child—

I, eating here his bread, clothed in his
clothes,

Seated upon his seat, give D'Ormea leave
To outrage him ! We talk—perchance

they tear

My father from his bed—the old hands
feel

For one who is not, but who should be
there—

And he finds D'Ormea ! D'Ormea, too,
finds him !

The crowded chamber when the lights
go out—

Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the
dark—

The accursed promptings of the minute !
My guards !

To horse—and after, with me—and
prevent !

Pol. [*seizing his hand.*] King Charles !
Pause here upon this strip of time

Allotted you out of eternity !

Crowns are from God—in His name you
hold yours,

Your life's no least thing, were it fit
your life

Should be abjured along with rule ; but
now,

Keep both ! Your duty is to live and
rule—

You, who would vulgarly look fine
enough .

In the world's eye, deserting your soul's
charge,—

Ay, you would have men's praise—this
Rivoli

Would be illumined ! while, as 'tis, no
doubt,
Something of stain will ever rest on
you ;
No one will rightly know why you
refused
To abdicate ; they'll talk of deeds you
could
Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much
expect

Future achievements will blot out the
Past,
Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
Be happy any more. 'Twill be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty's seen
As palpably as now—the months, the
years

Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace-
rooms

Pregnant with memories of the Past :
your eye

May turn to mine and find no comfort
there,

Through fancies that beset me, as your-
self,

Of other courses, with far other issues,
We might have taken this great night—
such bear,

As I will bear ! What matters happi-
ness ?

Duty ! There's man's one moment—
this is yours !

[*Putting the crown on his head, and
the sceptre in his hand, she places
him on his seat : a long pause and
silence.*

Enter D'ORMEA and VICTOR.

Vic. At last I speak ; but once—that
once, to you !

'Tis you I ask, not these your varletry,
Who's King of us ?

Cha. [*from his seat.*] Count Tende . . .

Vic. What your spies
Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—
Here to your face, amid your guards !
I choose

To take again the crown whose shadow
I gave—

For still its potency surrounds the weak
White locks their felon hands have
discomposed.

Or, I'll not ask who's King, but simply,
who

Withholds the crown I claim ? Deliver
it !

I have no friend in the wide world : nor
France

Nor England cares for me : you see the
sum

Of what I can avail. Deliver it !

Cha. Take it, my father !

And now say in turn,

Was it done well, my father—sure not
well,

To try me thus ! I might have seen
much cause

For keeping it—too easily seen cause !

But, from that moment, e'en more wor-
fully

My life had pined away, than pine it will.
Already you have much to answer for.

My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk
eyes

Were happy once ! No doubt, my people
think

That I'm their King still . . . but I can-
not strive !

Take it !

Vic. [*one hand on the crown CHARLES
offers, the other on his neck.*] So
few years give it quietly,

My son ! It will drop from me. See you
not ?

A crown's unlike a sword to give away—
That, let a strong hand to a weak hand
give !

But crowns should slip from palsied
brows to heads

Young as this head : yet mine is weak
enough,

E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for
phrases

To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece !
All is alike gone by with me—who beat

Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very
lines !

To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis'
rival,

And now . . .

Cha. [*putting the crown on him, to the
rest.*] The King speaks, yet none
kneels, I think !

Vic. I am then King ! As I became
a King

Despite the nations—kept myself a
King—

So I die King, with Kingship dying too
Around me ! I have lasted Europe's
time !

What wants my story of completion ?
Where

Must needs the damning break show !
Who mistrusts

My children here—tell they of any break
'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery
fall ?

And who were by me when I died but
they ?

Who ? —D'Ormea there !

Cha. What means he ?

Vic. Ever there !

Charles—how to save your story ?
Mine must go !

Say—say that you refused the crown to
me—

Charles, yours shall be my story ! You
immured

Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
I spend without a sight of you, then
die—

That will serve every purpose—tell that
tale

The world !

Cha. Mistrust me ? Help !

Vic. Past help, past reach !

Tis in the heart—you cannot reach the
heart :

This broke mine, that I did believe, you,
Charles,

Would have denied and so disgraced me.
Pol. Charles

Has never ceased to be your subject, sire !

He reigned at first through setting up
yourself

As pattern : if he e'er seemed harsh to
you,

'Twas from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character : he acted you—
Ne'er for an instant did I think it
real,

Nor look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that
account ;

But so it was.

Cha. [to POLYX.] I love you, now,
indeed !

[To VICTOR.] You never knew me !

Vic. Hardly till this moment,
When I seem learning many other
things,

Because the time for using them is past.
If 'twere to do again ! That's idly
wished.

Truthfulness might prove policy as
good

As guile. Is this my daughter's fore-
head ? Yes—

I've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly—I've ploughed the deep
lines there

Which keep too well a crown from slip-
ping off !

No matter. Guile has made me King
again.

Louis—'twas in King Victor's time—long
since,

When *Louis* reigned—and, also, Victor
reigned—

How the world talks already of us two !
God of eclipse and each discoloured star,
Why do I linger then ?

Ha ! Where lurks he ?
D'Ormea ! Come nearer to your King !

Now stand !

[Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA
approaches.

But you lied, D'Ormea ! I do not repent.
[Dies.

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS

The Grand-Master's Prefect.
 The Patriarch's Nuncio.
 The Republic's Admiral.
 LOYS DE DREUX, Knight-Novice.
 Initiated Druses—DJABAL.
 „ „ KHALIL.
 „ „ ANAEL.

Initiated Druses—MAANI.
 „ „ KARSHOOK.
 RAGHIB, AYOOR, and others.
 Uninitiated Druses.
 Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's Attendants,
 Admiral's Force.

TIME, 14—.

PLACE, An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonised by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.

SCENE, A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.

ACT I

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOR, and other initiated Druses, each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—

Kar. The moon is carried off in purple fire:

Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,

On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
 Now ready to resume its pristine shape
 Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
 In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,

On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,

As he resumes our Founder's function!

Ragh. —Death
 Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved

So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea!

Ay.—Most joy be thine, O Mother-mountain! Thy brood

Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
 But thus—but thus! Behind, our
 Prefect's corse;

Before, a presence like the morning—
 thine,

Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem
 now

That day breaks!

Kar. Off then, with disguise at last!
 As from our forms this hateful garb we
 strip,

Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
 Discard each limb the ignoble gesture!

Cry,
 'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our
 mount

Of the world's secret, since the birth of
 time,

—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy
 stock,

No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect,
 we

Who rise...

Ay. Who shout...

Ragh. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
 Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!

[*They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.*]

Kar. Hold!

Ay. —Mine, I say;
 And mine shall it continue!

Kar. Just this fringe !
 Take anything beside ! Lo, spire on
 spire,
 Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to
 the top
 Of the roof, and hide themselves
 mysteriously
 Among the twinkling lights and darks
 that haunt
 Yon cornice ! Where the huge veil, they
 suspend
 Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
 Floats wide, then falls again as if its
 slave,
 Thescented air, took heart now, and anon
 Lost heart, to buoy its breadths of
 gorgeousness
 Above the gloom they droop in—all the
 porch
 Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charac-
 tery ;
 And see yon eight-point cross of white
 flame, winking
 Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke
 marble-stone :
 Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so
 thou leav'st me
 This single fringe !
Ay. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox ?
 Help !
 —Three handbreadths of gold fringe,
 my son was set
 To twist, the night he died !
Kar. Nay, hear the knave !
 And I could witness my one daughter
 borne,
 A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet
 fold
 These arms, be mute, lest word of mine
 should mar
 Our Master's work, delay the Prefect
 here
 A day, prevent his sailing hence for
 Rhodes—
 How know I else ?—Hear me denied my
 right
 By such a knave !
Ragh. [interposing.] Each ravage for
 himself !
 Booty enough ! On, Druses ! Be there
 found
 Blood and a heap behind us ; with us,
 Djabal

Turned Hakeem ; and before us,
 Lebanon !
 Yields the porch ? Spare not ! There
 his minions dragged
 Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's
 couch !
 Ayooob ! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's
 pride,
 Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on
 his brow,
 Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-
 work there !
 Onward in Djabal's name !
As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL.
A pause and silence.
Kha. Was it for this,
 Djabal hath summoned you ? Deserve
 you thus
 A portion in to-day's event ? What,
 here—
 When most behoves your feet fall soft,
 your eyes
 Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at
 Djabal's side,
 Close in his very hearing, who, per-
 chance,
 Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's
 dreaded shape,—
 Dispute you for these gauds ?
Ay. How say'st thou, Khalil ?
 Doubtless our Master prompts thee !
 Take the fringe,
 Old Karshook ! I supposed it was a
 day . . .
Kha. For pillage ?
Kar. Harken, Khalil ! Never spoke
 A boy so like a song-bird ; we avouch
 thee
 Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
 Except thy bright twin-sister—thou
 and Anael
 Challenge his prime regard : but we
 may crave
 (Such nothings as we be) a portion too
 Of Djabal's favour ; in him we believed,
 His bound ourselves, him moon by
 moon obeyed,
 Kept silence till this daybreak—so, may
 claim
 Reward : who grudges me my claim ?
Ay. To-day
 Is not as yesterday !

Ragh. Stand off !
Kha. Rebel you ?
 Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
 His wrath on you, the day of our
 Return ?

Other Druses. Wrench from their
 grasp the fringe ! Hound ! must
 the earth

Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee ?—
 and thee ?

Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault !

Kha. Oh, shame !
 Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic
 tribe

Who, flying the approach of Osman,
 bore

Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's
 ridge

Its birthplace, hither ! Let the sea
 divide

These hunters from their prey, you said,
 and safe

In this dim islet's virgin solitude
 Tend we our faith, the spark, till
 happier time

Fan it to fire ; till Hakeem rise again,
 According to his word that, in the flesh
 Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
 He, at our extreme need, would inter-
 pose,

And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
 Lead us himself to Lebanon once more.
 Was't not thus you departed years ago,
 Ere I was born ?

Druses. 'Twas even thus, years ago.

Kha. And did you call—(according
 to old laws

Which bid us, lest the sacred grow pro-
 fane,

Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
 With strangers fortune makes our lords,
 and live

As Christian with the Christian, Jew
 with Jew,

Druse only with the Druses)—did you
 call

Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's
 rage,

(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
 The remnant of your tribe) a race self-
 vowed

To endless warfare with his hordes and
 him,

The White-cross Knights of the adjacent
 Isle ?

Kar. And why else rend we down,
 wrench up, raze out ?

These Knights of Rhodes we thus
 solicited

For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
 Than aught we fled—their Prefect ; who
 began

His promised mere paternal governance,
 By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikh-
 Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
 Of crushing, with our nationalities,
 Each chance of our return, and taming
 us

Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he
 thinks

To end by this day's treason.

Kha. Say I not ?
 You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
 Your Sheikhs cut off, your very garb
 proscribed,

Must yet receive one degradation more .
 The Knights at last throw off the mask
 —transfer,

As tributary now, and appanage,
 This islet they are but protectors of,
 To their own ever-craving lord, the
 Church,

Which licenses all crimes that pay it
 thus.

You, from their Prefect, were to be con-
 signed

(Pursuant to I know not what vile pact)
 To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to
 outvie

His predecessor in all wickedness.
 When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
 Djabal, the man, in semblance, but our
 God

Confessed by signs and portents. Ye
 saw fire

Bicker round Djabal, heard strange
 music flit

Bird-like about his brow ?

Druses. We saw—we heard !
 Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
 The phantasm Khalif, King of Pro-
 digies !

Kha. And as he said hath not our
 Khalif done,
 And so disposed events (from land to
 land

Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
The pact of villany complete, there
comes

This Patriarch's Nuncio with this
Master's Prefect

Their treason to consummate,—each
will face

For a crouching handful, an uplifted
nation ;

For simulated Christians, confessed
Druses ;

And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-
mount,

Freedmen returning there 'neath Ven-
ice' flag ;

That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foc,
Grants us from Candia escort home at
price

Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts
her own—

Venice, whose promised argosies should
stand

Toward the harbour : is it now that you,
and you,

And you, selected from the rest to bear
The burthen of the Khalif's secret,
further

To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
And witness in the Prefect's hall his
fate—

That you dare clutch these gauds ? Ay,
drop them !

Kar. True,

Most true, all this ; and yet, may one
dare hint,

Thou art the youngest of us ?—though
employed

Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
Much less, when'er beside him Anael
graces

The cedar throne, his Queen-bride, art
thou like

To occupy its lowest step that day !
Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou
aspirest,

Forbidden such or such an honour,—
say,

Would silence serve so amply ?

Kha. Karshook thinks
I covet honours ? Well, nor idly thinks !
Honours ? I have demanded of them all
The greatest !

Kar. I supposed so.

Kha. Judge yourselves !

Turn—thus : 'tis in the alcove at the
back

Of yonder columned porch, whose
entrance now

The veil hides, that our Prefect holds
his state ;

Receives the Nuncio, when the one,
from Rhodes.

The other lands from Syria ; there they
meet.

Now, I have sued with earnest prayers...

Kar. For what

Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue ?

Kha. That mine—

Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs

—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect
there !

Djabal reserves that office for himself.

[A silence.

Thus far, as youngest of you all, I speak

—Scarce more enlightened than your-
selves : since, near

As I approach him, nearer as I trust

Soon to approach our Master, he reveals

Only the God's power, not the glory yet.

Therefore I reasoned with you : now,
as servant

To Djabal, bearing his authority,

Hear me appoint your several posts :
Till noon

None see him save myself and Anael—
once

The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting
off

The embodied Awe's tremendous mys-
tery,

The weakness of the flesh disguise,
resumes

His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from

Rhodes !—Without a sign

That he suspects aught since he left our
Isle ;

Nor in his train a single guard beyond
Tho few he sailed with hence : so have
we learned

From Loys.

Kar. Loys ? Is not Loys gone
For ever ?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight,
returned ?

The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on
the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire,—and
leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-
dawn
I kept watch to the Northward ; take
but note

Of my poor vigilance to Djabal !

Kha. Peace !
Thou, Karshook, with thy company,
receive

The Prefect as appointed : see, all keep
The wonted show of servitude : an-
nounce

His entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further
pleasure

Of Djabal ! (Loys back, whom Djabal
sent

To Rhodes that we might spare the
single Knight
Worth sparing !)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first ! Say, I
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the
South !

Saidst thou a Crossed-keys' flag would
flap the mast ?

It nears apace ! One galley and no
more—

If Djabal chance to ask who spied the
flag,

Forget not, I it was !

Kha. Thou, Ayoob, bring
The Nuncio and his followers hither !
Break

One rule prescribed, ye wither in your
blood,

Die at your fault !

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see
home !

—Shall banquet in the sombre groves
again !

Hail to thee, Khalil ! Venice looms afar ;
The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
Bear up from Candia in the distance !

Kha.

Joy !

Summon our people, Raghib ! Bid all
forth !

Tell them the long-kept secret, old and
young !

Set free the captives, let the trampled
raise

Their faces from the dust, because at
length

The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's
reign

Begins anew ! Say, Venice for our
guard,

Ere night we steer for Syria ! Hear you,
Druses ?

Hear you this crowning witness to the
claims

Of Djabal ? Oh, I spoke of hope and
fear,

Reward and punishment, because he
bade

Who has the right ; for me, what should
I say

But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
No majesty of all that rapt regard

Vex by the least omission ! Let him rise
Without a check from you !

Druses.

Let Djabal rise !

Enter LOYS.—The Druses are silent.

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal ?—for
I seek him, friends !

[*Aside.*] *Tu Dieu !* 'Tis as our Isle broke
out in song

For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule !

But no—they cannot dream of their
good fortune !

[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses ! I have
tidings for you,

But first for Djabal : where 's your tall
bewitcher,

With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-
mouth ?

Kha. [*Aside to KAR.*] Loys, in truth !
Yet Djabal cannot err !

Kar. [*to KHA.*] And who takes charge
of Loys ? That 's forgotten,

Despite thy wariness ! Will Loys
stand

And see his comrade slaughtered ?

Loys. [*Aside.*] How they shrink
And whisper, with those rapid faces !
What ?

The sight of me in their oppressors' garb

Strikes terror to the simple tribe? God's shame

On those that bring our Order ill repute !
But all 's at end now ; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from over-sea :

The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus ! [*Aloud.*] I asked for
Djabal—

Kar. [*Aside.*] Better
One lured him, ere he can suspect,
inside

The corridor ; 'twere easy to dispatch
A youngster. [*To Loys.*] Djabal passed
some minutes since

Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold ! What, him
dispatch ?

The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon ? Who,—noblest
Knight

Of all that learned from time to time
their trade

Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomps, a truest child of
pride,—

Yet stood between the Prefect and our-
selves

From the beginning ? Loys, Djabal
makes

Account of, and precisely sent to
Rhodes

For safety ?—I take charge of him !

[*To Loys.*] Sir Loys,—
Loys. There, cousins ! Does Sir Loys
strike you dead ?

Kha. [*advancing.*] Djabal has inter-
course with few or none

Till noontide : but, your pleasure ?

Loys. ' Intercourse
With few or none ? '—(Ah, Khalil, when
you spoke

I saw not your smooth face ! All health !
—and health

To Anael ! How fares Anael ?)—' Inter-
course

With few or none ? ' Forget you, I've
been friendly

With Djabal long ere you or any Druse ?

—Enough of him at Rennes, I think,
beneath

The Duke my father's roof ! He'd tell
by the hour,

With fixed white eyes beneath his
swarthy brow,

Plausiblist stories . . .

Kha. Stories, say you ?—Ah,
The quaint attire !

Loys. My dress for the last time !
How sad I cannot make you understand,

This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces

And noblest ; and, what's best and
oldest there,

See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which
the Nuncio

Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day !

Kha. The Nuncio we await ? What
brings you back

From Rhodes, Sir Loys ?

Loys. How you island-tribe
Forget, the world's awake while here
you drowse !

What brings me back ? What should
not bring me, rather ?

Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-
day—

Is not my year's probation out ? I come
To take the knightly vows.

Kha. What 's that you wear ?

Loys. This Rhodian cross ? The cross
your Prefect wore.

You should have seen, as I saw, the full
Chapter

Rise, to a man, while they transferred
this cross

From that unworthy Prefect's neck to
. . . (fool—

My secret will escape me !) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight

ere eve

Am I ; bound, like the rest, to yield my
wealth

To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's
fame)

—Change this gay weed for the black
white-crossed gown,

And fight to death against the Infidel

—Not, therefore, against you, you
Christians with

Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes ! But Khalil,

prithece,

Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?

Kha. Ah, the new sword!

Loys. See now! You handle sword
As 'twere a camel-staff! Pull! That's
my motto,

Annealed, 'Pro fide,' on the blade in
blue.

Kha. No curve in it? Surely a blade
should curve!

Loys. Straight from the wrist!
Loose—it should poise itself!

Kha. [waving with irrepressible exultation the sword.] We are a nation,
Loys, of old fame

Among the mountains! Rights have we
to keep

With the sword too!

[Remembering himself.] But I forget—
you bid me

Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight
scares you not?

(The People I will make of him and
them!

Oh, let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come
he must!

Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the
Prefect's Chamber,
And find . . . [Aside.] Nay, 'tis thy
cursed race's token,
Frank pride, no special insolence of
thine!

[Aloud.] Tarry, and I will do your
bidding, *Loys.*

[To the rest aside.] Now, forth you! I
proceed to Djabal straight.

Leave this poor boy, who knows not
what he says.

Oh, will it not add joy to even thy joy,
Djabal, that I report all friends were
true?

[KHALIL goes, followed by the Druses.

Loys. Tu Dieu! How happy I shall
make these Druses!

Was't not surpassingly contrived of me
To get the long list of their wrongs by
heart,

Then take the first pretence for stealing
off

From these poor islanders, present my-
self

Sudden at Rhodes before the noble
Chapter,

And (as best proof of ardour in its cause
Which ere to-night will have become,
too, mine)

Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its
body,

This Prefect and his villanous career?
The princely Synod! All I dared re-
quest

Was his dismissal; and they graciously
Consigned his very office to myself—

Myself may heal whate'er's diseased!
And good

For them, they did so! Since I never
felt

How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,
Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine—
To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I
leapt

On shore, so home a feeling greeted me
That I could half believe in Djabal's
story,

He used to tempt my father with, at
Rennes—

And me, too, since the story brought
me here—

Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's
war,

Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days
At least to spend in the Isle! and, my
news known

An hour hence, what if Anael turns on
me

The great black eyes I must forget?

Why, fool,
Recall them, then? My business is with
Djabal,

Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek
him?—

The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day!

ACT II

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. That a strong man should think
himself a God!

I—Hakeem? To have wandered through
the world,

Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now
scorn, now faith,

For my one chant with many a change,
 my tale
 Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance
 —this
 Required, forsooth, no mere man's
 faculty,
 Nor less than Hakeem's? The persuad-
 ing Loys
 To pass probation here; the getting
 access
 By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,
 The gaining my tribe's confidence by
 fraud
 That would disgrace the very Franks,—
 a few
 Of Europe's secrets that subdue the
 flame,
 The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with
 these,
 Took Hakeem?

And I feel this first to-day!
 Does the day break, is the hour immu-
 nent
 When one deed, when my whole life's
 deed, my deed
 Must be accomplished? Hakeem?
 Why the God?
 Shout, rather, 'Djabal, Youssof's child,
 thought slain
 With his whole race, the Druses'
 Sheikhs, this Prefect
 Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a
 child,
 Returns from traversing the world, a man,
 Able to take revenge, lead back the
 march
 To Lebanon'—so shout, and who gain-
 says?

But now, because delusion mixed itself
 Insensibly with this career, all's
 changed!
 Have I brought Venice to afford us
 convoy?
 'True—but my jugglings wrought that!'
 Put I heart
 Into our people where no heart lurked?
 —Ah,

What cannot an impostor do!'
 Not this!
 Not do this which I do! Not bid,
 avault
 Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy
 hold on me!

—Nor even get a hold on me! 'Tis
 now—

This day—hour—minute—'tis as here
 I stand

On the accursed threshold of the Prefect,
 That I am found deceiving and de-
 ceived!

And now what do I?—Hasten to the
 few

Deceived, ere they deceive the many—
 shout,

As I professed, I did believe myself!
 Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—
 If Ayoob, Karshook saw—Maam there
 Must tell you how I saw my father
 sink;

My mother's arms twine still about my
 neck;

I hear my brother's shriek, here 's yet
 the scar

Of what was meant for my own death-
 blow—say,

If you had woke like me, grown year by
 year

Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
 Would it be wondrous such delusion
 grew?

I walked the world, asked help at every
 hand;

Came help or no? Not this and this?
 Which helps

When I returned with, found the
 Prefect here,

The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's
 self,

The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
 Reserved for such a juncture,—could
 I call

My mission aught but Hakeem's?
 Promised Hakeem

More than performs the Djabal—you
 absolve?

—Me, you will never shame before the
 crowd

Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both
 throngs surround

The few deceived, the many unabused,
 —Who, thus surrounded, slay for you
 and them

The Prefect, lead to Lebanon! No
 Khalif,

But Sheikh once more! Mere Djabal—
 not...

Enter KHALIL hastily.

Kha. —God Hakeem !
'Tis told ! The whole Druse nation
knows thee, Hakeem,
As we ! and mothers lift on high their
babes
Who seem aware, so glisten their great
eyes,
Thou hast not failed us ; ancient brows
are proud !
Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
Than at thy coming ! The Druse heart
is thine !
Take it ! my Lord and theirs, be thou
adored !

Dja. [Aside.] Adored !—but I re-
nounce it utterly !

Kha. Already are they instituting
choirs
And dances to the Khalif, as of old
'Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.

Dja. [Aside.] I abjure it !
'Tis not mine—not for me !

Kha. Why pour they wine
Flavoured like honey and bruised
mountain herbs ?

Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-
fruit ?

Oh—let me tell thee—Esaad, we sup-
posed

Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
The last sun rise on the Isle—he can see
now !

The shamed Druse women never wept
before :

They can look up when we reach home,
they say.

Smell !—Sweet cane, saved in Lilith's
breast thus long—

Sweet !—it grows wild in Lebanon.
And I

Alone do nothing for thee ! 'Tis my
office

Just to announce what well thou
know'st—but thus

Thou bidst me. At this selfsame
moment tend

The Prefect, Nuncio, and the Admiral
Hither, by their three sea-paths : nor
forget

Who were the trusty watchers !—thou
forget ?

Like me, who do forget that Anael
bade . . .

Dja. [Aside.] Ay, Anael, Anael—is
that said at last ?

Louder than all, that would be said, I
knew !

What does abjuring mean, confessing
mean,

To the people ? Till that woman crossed
my path,

On went I, solely for my people's sake :
I saw her, and I first saw too myself,

And slackened pace : ' if I should prove
indeed

Hakeem—with Anael by ! '

Kha. [Aside.] Ah, he is rapt !

Dare I at such a moment break on him
Even to do my sister's bidding ? Yes !

The eyes are Djabal's, and not Hakeem's
yet !

Though but till I have spoken this,
perchance.

Dja. [Aside.] To yearn to tell her, and
yet have no one

Great heart's word that will tell her !
I could gasp

Doubtless one such word out, and die !

[*Aloud.*] You said
That Anael . . .

Kha. . . . Fain would see thee,
speak with thee,

Before thou change, discard this Djabal's
shape

She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is
to know.

Something's to say that will not from
her mind :

I know not what—' Let him but come ! '
she said.

Dja. [Half-apart.] My nation—all my
Druses—how fare they ?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to
save,

Hold they their posts ? Wait they their
Khalif too ?

Kha. All at the signal pant to flock
around

That banner of a brow !

Dja. [Aside.] And when they flock,
Confess them this—and after, for
reward,

Be chased with howlings to her feet
perchance ?

—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf
and blind,

Precede me there—forestall my story,
there—

Tell it in mocks and jeers !

I lose myself !

Who needs a Hakeem to direct him
now ?

I need the veriest child—why not this
child ?

[*Turning abruptly to KHALIL.*

You are a Druse too, Khalil ; you were
nourished

Like Anael with our mysteries : if she
Could vow, so nourished, to love only
one

Who should revenge the Druses, whence
proceeds

Your silence ? Wherefore made you no
essay,

Who thus implicitly can execute

My bidding ? What have I done, you
could not ?

Who, knowing more than Anael the
prostration

Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life

Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,

This Prefect ? All 's in readiness ?

Kha.

The sword,

The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic
tiar,

Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
The Prefect's chamber.

Dja.

—Why did you despair ?

Kha. I know our nation's state ? 'Too
surely know,

As thou, who speak'st to prove me !
Wrongs like ours

Should wake revenge : but when I
sought the wronged

And spoke,—' The Prefect stabbed your
son—arise !

Your daughter, while you starve, eats
shameless bread

In his pavilion—then, arise ! '—my
speech

Fell idly—'twas, ' Be silent, or worse
fare !

Endure, till time's slow cycle prove
complete !

Who may'st thou be that takest on thee
to thrust

Into this peril—art thou Hakeem ? '
No !

Only a mission like thy mission renders
All these obedient at a breath, subdues
Their private passions, brings their wills
to one !

Dja. You think so ?

Kha.

Even now—when

they have witnessed

Thy miracles—had I not threatened
them

With Hakeem's vengeance, they would
mar the whole,

And couch ere this, each with his
special prize,

Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main
hope

To perish ! No ! When these have
kissed thy feet

At Lebanon, the Past purged off, the
Present

Clear,—for the Future, even Hakeem's
mission

May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
Can rule them thus renewed.—I talk to
thee !

Dja. And wisely. He is Anael's
brother, pure

As Anael's self ! Go say, I come to her.
Haste ! I will follow you. [*KHALIL goes.*

Oh, not confess

To these—the blinded multitude—con-
fess,

Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half authorize its means ! Only to her

Let me confess my fault, who in my
path

Curled up like incense from a mage-
king's tomb

When he would have the wayfarer
descend

Through the earth's rift and take hid
treasure up.

When should my first child's-careless-
ness have stopped

If not when I, whose lone youth hurried
past

Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses'
sake,

At length recovered in one Druse all
joys ?

Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer,
still

Would I confess ! On the gulf's verge
I pause.

How could I slay the Prefect, thus and
thus ?

Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy !
[*Goes.*]

*Enter ANAEL, and MAANI, who is assisting
to array her in the ancient dress of
the Druses.*

An. Those saffron vestures of the
tabret-girls !

Comes Djabal, think you ?

Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.

An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee
kinglier, Lebanon,
Than in my dreams ?—Nay, all the
tresses off

My forehead ! look I lovely so ? He
says

That I am lovely.

Maa. Lovely : nay, that hangs
Awry.

An. You tell me how a khandjar
hangs ?

The sharp side, thus, along the heart,
see, marks

The maiden of our class. Are you con-
tent

For Djabal as for me ?

Maa. Content, my child.

An. Oh, mother, tell me more of him !
He comes

Even now—tell more, fill up my soul
with him !

Maa. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . .
tell you all ?

An. What will be changed in Djabal
when the Change

Arrives ? Which feature ? Not his eyes !
Maa. 'Tis writ,

Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove
the dark

Superbly.

An. Not his eyes ! His voice perhaps ?
Yet that's no change ; for a grave
current lived

—Grandly beneath the surface ever
lived,

That, scattering, broke as in live silver
spray

While . . . ah, the bliss . . . he would
discourse to me

In that enforced, still fashion, word on
word !

'Tis the old current which must swell
thro' that,

For what least tone, Maani, could I lose ?
'Tis surely not his voice will change !

—If Hakeem

Only stood by ! If Djabal, somehow,
passed

Out of the radiance as from out a robe ;
Possessed, but was not it !

He lived with you ?

Well—and that morning Djabal saw me
first

And heard my vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People—on that day . . .
proceed !

Maa. Once more, then : from the
time of his return

In secret, changed so since he left the
Isle

That I, who screened our Emir's last of
sons,

This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child

he was,

—Who dreamed so long the youth he
might become—

I knew not in the man that child ; the
man

Who spoke alone of hopes to save our
tribe,

How he had gone from land to land to
save

Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to
dread ;

And much he mused, days, nights, alone
he mused :

But never till that day when, pale and
worn

As by a persevering woe, he cried
'Is there not one Druse left me ?'—and

I showed

The way to Khalil's and your hiding-
place

From the abhorred eye of the Prefect
here,

So that he saw you, heard you speak—
till then,

Never did he announce—(how the moon
seemed

To open and shut, the while, above us
both !)

—His mission was the mission promised us—

The cycle had revolved—all things renewing,

He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead

His children home anon, now veiled to work

Great purposes—the Druses now would change!

An. And they have changed! And obstacles did sink,

And furtherances rose! And round his form

Played fire, and music beat her angel wings!

My people, let me more rejoice, oh, more

For you than for myself! Did I but watch

Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass,
One of the throng, how proud were I—

tho' ne'er
Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be chosen

His own from all, the most his own of all,

To be exalted with him, side by side.

Lead the exulting Druses, meet . . . ah, how

Worthily meet the maidens who await
Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve

This honour, in their eyes? So bright are they

That saffron-vestured sound the tabrets there—

The girls who throng there in my dreams! One hour

And all is over: how shall I do aught
That may deserve next hour's exalting?

—How?—

[*Suddenly to MAANI.*

Mother, I am not worthy of him! I read it

Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me

I am not, yet forbears! Why else revert
To one theme ever?—how mere human

gifts
Suffice him in myself—whose worship

fades,
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, that when he comes . . .

[*DJABAL enters.*] Oh, why is it
I cannot kneel to you?

Dja. Rather, 'tis I
Should kneel to you, my Anael!

An. Even so!
For never seem you—shall I speak the

truth?—
Never a God to me! 'Tis the Man's

hand,
Eye, voice! Oh, do you veil these to our

people,
Or but to me? To them, I think, to

them!
And brightness is their veil, shadow—

my truth!
You mean that I should never kneel to

you
—So I will kneel!

Dja. [*preventing her.*] No—no!
[*Feeling the khandjar as he raises her.*

Ha, have you chosen . . .
An. The khandjar with our ancient

gurb. But, Djabal,
Change not, be not exalted yet! give

time
That I may plan more, perfect more.

My blood
Beats—beats!

[*Aside.*] Oh must I then—since
Loys leaves us

Never to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already—

must
I needs confess them now to Djabal?

Own
That when I saw that stranger—heard

his voice,
My faith fell, and the woeful thought

flashed first
That each effect of Djabal's presence,

taken
For proof of more than human attributes

In him, by me whose heart at his approach

Beat fast, whose brain while he was by
swam round,

Whose soul at his departure died away,
—That every such effect might have

been wrought
In others' frames, tho' not in mine, by

Loys
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?

How can I be rewarded presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed ?

Dja. [Aside.] Avow the truth ? I
cannot ! In what words

Avow that all she loves in me is false ?
—Which yet has served that flower-like
love of hers

To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and
clasp

With its divinest wealth of leaf and
bloom.

Could I take down the prop-work, in it-
self

So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
With painted cups and fruitage—might
these still

Bask in the sun, unconscious their own
strength

Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
The old support thus silently with-
drawn !

But no ; the beauteous fabric crushes too.
'Tis not for my sake but for Anael's sake
I leave her soul this Hakeem where it
leans !

Oh, could I vanish from them—quit the
Isle !

And yet—a thought comes : here my
work is done

At every point ; the Druses must
return—

Have convoy to their birth-place back,
where

The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that : 'tis for my-
self,

For my own vengeance in the Prefect's
death,

I stay now, not for them—to slay or
spare

The Prefect, whom imports it save my-
self ?

He cannot bar their passage from the
Isle ;

What would his death be but my own
reward ?

Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone !
Let him escape with all my House's
blood !

Ere he can reach land, Djabal disap-
pears,

And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh
as first,

Live in her memory, keeping her sub-
lime

Above the world. She cannot touch
that world

By ever knowing what I truly am,
Since Loys,—of mankind the only one
Able to link my Present with my Past,
My life in Europe with my Island life,
Thence, able to unmask me,—I've dis-
posed

Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee !

Dja. Loys ? To drag me back ? It
cannot be !

An. [Aside.] Loys ! Ah, doubt may
not be stifled so !

Kha. Can I have erred that thou so
gaze ? Yes,

I told thee not, in the glad press of
tidings

Of higher import, Loys is returned
Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
Twice the light-heartedness of old. Al-
though

On some inauguration he expects,
To-day, the world's fate hung !

Dja. —And asks for me ?

Kha. Thou knowest all things ! Thee
in chief he greets,

But every Druse of us is to be happy
At his arrival, he declares : were Loys
Thou, Master, he could have no wider
soul

To take us in with. How I love that
Loys !

Dja. [Aside.] Shame winds me with
her tether round and round !

An. [Aside.] Loys ? I take the trial !
it is meet,

The little I can do, be done ; that
faith,

All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compass. Ay.
this way

All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine.

Advance

Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my
Lord,

The mortal's with the more than mortal's
gifts !

Dja. [*Aside.*] Before, there were so few deceived! and now
There's doubtless not one least Druse
in the Isle
But, having learned my superhuman
claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God, will
clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first
word!
While Loys, for his part, will hold me
up,
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's
eyes!
Could I but keep him longer yet
awhile
From them, amuse him here until I
plan
How he and I at once may leave the
Isle?
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency:
There's Anael!

An. Please you?

Dja. Anael—none but she!
[*To ANAEL.*] I pass some minutes in the
chamber there,
Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with
him

Until I join you. Khalil follows me.

An. [*Aside.*] As I divined: he bids
me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept!
Let me see Loys!

Loys. [*Without.*] Djabal!

An. [*Aside.*] 'Tis his voice.
The smooth Frank trifter with our
people's wrongs,
The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an igno-
rance

Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me
close

With what I viewed at distance! let
myself

Probe this delusion to the core!

Dja. He comes!
Khalil, along with me; while Anael
waits

Till I return once more—and but once
more!

ACT III

ANAEL and LOYS.

An. Here leave me! Here I wait
another. 'Twas
For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.

Loys. Love—how protest a love I
dare not feel?

Mad words may doubtless have escaped
me—you

Are here—I only feel you here!

An. No more!

Loys. But once again, whom could
you love? I dare,

Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood
we embrace,

Love we abjure: so, speak on safely—
speak,

Lest I speak, and betray my faith.
And yet

To say your breathing passes through
me, changes

My blood to spirit, and my spirit to
you,

As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love! You
said

You could love one . . .

An. One only! We are bent
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him;
we

Have ancient rights—who gives them
back to us,

I love. Forbear me! Let my hand go!
Loys. Him

You could love only? Where is Djabal?
Stay!

[*Aside.*] Yet wherefore stay? Who does
this but myself?

Had I apprised her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknow-
ledge? No,

She sees into my heart's core! What is
it

Feeds either cheek with red, as June
some rose?

Why turns she from me? Ah fool, over-
fond

To dream I could call up . . .

. . . What never dream

Yet feigned ! 'Tis love ! Oh Anael,
speak to me !

Djabal !

An. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's
chamber

At noon ! *[She paces the room.]*

Loys. *[Aside.]* And am I not the
Prefect now ?

Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one
Unable to accept her love ? The Past
Breaks up beneath my footing : came
I here

This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend
day by day

Content beside her in the Isle ? What
works

This knowledge in me now ! Her eye has
broken

The faint disguise away : for Anael's
sake

I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till
now,

To live without !

—As I must live ! To-day
Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . .
never shall

Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
Thy soldier !

An. Djabal you demanded, comes !

Loys. *[Aside.]* What wouldst thou,
Loys ? See him ? Nought beside

Is wanting : I have felt his voice a spell
From first to last. He brought me here,
made known

The Druses to me, drove me hence to
seek

Redress for them ; and shall I meet him
now,

When nought is wanting but a word of
his,

To—what ?—induce me to spurn hope,
faith, pride,

Honour away,—to cast my lot among
His tribe, become a proverb in men's
mouths,

Breaking my high pact of companion-
ship

With those who graciously bestowed on
me

The very opportunities I turn

Against them ! Let me not see Djabal
now !

An. The Prefect also comes !

Loys. *[Aside.]* Him let me see,
Not Djabal ! Him, degraded at a word,
To soothe me,—to attest belief in me—
And, after, Djabal ! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have
destroyed

This heart's rebellion, and coerced this
will

For ever.

Anael, not before the vows
Irrevocably fix me . . .

Let me fly !

The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever !

[Goes.]

An. Yes, I am calm now ; just one
way remains—

One, to attest my faith in him : for, see,
I were quite lost else : Loys, Djabal,
stand

On either side—two men ! I balance
looks

And words, give Djabal a man's pre-
ference,

No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is ab-
sorbed !

And for a love like this, the God who
saves

My race, selects me for his bride ! One
way !—

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. *[To himself.]* No moment is to
waste, then ; 'tis resolved !

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
The Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least,—
All's over ! Even now my bark awaits—
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun forever !
And now, to Anael !

An. Djabal, I am thine !

Dja. Mine ? Djabal's ?—As if Hakeem
had not been ?

An. Not Djabal's ? Say first, do you
read my thoughts ?

Why need I speak, if you can read my
thoughts ?

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand
times.

An. (My secret's safe, I shall surprise him yet !)
 Djabal, I knew your secret from the first—
 Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
 You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
 And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see !)
 . . . I knew you were not human, for I said
 ' This dim secluded house where the sea beats
 Is Heaven to me—my people's huts are Hell
 To them ; this august form will follow me,
 Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him ;
 And they, the Prefect ; Oh, my happiness
 Round to the full whether I choose or no ' His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
 His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say
 He let me love him : in that moment's bliss
 I shall forget my people pine for home—
 They pass and they repass with pallid eyes !'
 I vowed at once a certain vow ; this vow—
 Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
 Embrace me !

Dja. [*Apart.*] And she loved me !
 Nought remained
 But that ! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead ?

An. Ah, you reproach me ! True, his death crowns all,
 I know—or should know : and I would do much,
 Believe ! but, death—Oh, you, who have known death,
 Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful
 As we report !

Death !—a fire curls within us
 From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,

Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
 Of flesh, perchance !

Death !—witness, I would die,
 Whate'er death be, would venture now to die

For Khalil—for Maani—what for thee ?
 Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance

My vow will not be broken, for I must
 Do something to attest my faith in you,
 Be worthy of you !

Dja. [*avoiding her.*] I come for that—to say

Such an occasion is at hand : 'tis like
 I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part

For ever !

An. We part ? Just so ! I have succumbed,—

I am, he thinks, unworthy—and nought less

Will serve than such approval of my faith !

Then, we part not ! Remains there no way short

Of that ? Oh, not that !

Death !—Yet a hurt bird
 Died in my hands—its eyes filmed—

' Nay, it sleeps,'
 I said, ' will wake to-morrow well '—
 'twas dead !

Dja. I stand here and time fleets.
 Anael—I come

To bid a last farewell to you : perhaps
 We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect

Arrive . . .

Enter KHALIL, breathlessly.

Kha. He's here ! The Prefect !
 Twenty guards,

No more—no sign he dreams of danger.
 All

Awaits thee only—Ayoob, Karshook,
 keep

Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment

To join us with thy Druses to a man !
 Still holds his course the Nuncio—near

and near

The fleet from Candia steering !
Dja. [*Aside.*] All is lost !

—Or won ?

Kha. And I have laid the sacred robes,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—
the place

Commanded. Thou wilt hear the
Prefect's trumpet.

Dja. Then I keep Anael,—him then,
past recall,

I slay—'tis forced on me ! As I began
I must conclude—so be it !

Kha. For the rest,
Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword,
All is so safe that . . . I will ne'er entreat
Thy post again of thee : tho' danger
none,

There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect !

An. [*Aside.*] And 'tis now that
Djabal

Would leave me !—in the glory meet for
him !

Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed
to you,

Or any Druse : what peril there may be,
I keep. [*Aside.*] All things conspire to
hound me on !

Not now, my soul, draw back, at least !
Not now !

The course is plain, howe'er obscure all
else—

Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps,
regain

The Cedars—then let all dark clear it-
self !

I slay him !

Kha. Anael, and no part for us !

[*To Dja.*] Hast thou possessed her
with . . .

Dja. [*to An.*] Whom speak you to ?
What is it you behold there ? Nay, this
smile

Turns stranger. Shudder you ? The
man must die,

As thousands of our race have died thro'
him.

One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it ; let him
fill

Straight some new expiatory form, of
earth

Or sea, the reptile, or some æry thing :

What is there in his death ?

An. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us ?

Dja. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's
entry ;

Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here,
I slay the Prefect ; meanwhile Ayoob
leads

The Nuncio with his guards within: once
these

Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign

Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me : this double
sign

That justice is performed and help
arrived,

When Ayoob shall receive, but not
before,

Let him throw ope the palace doors,
admit

The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.

Go, Khalil, hurry all ! no pause, no
pause !

Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon !

Kha. What sign ? and who the
bearer ?

Dja. Who shall show
My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she
stands !

Have I not . . . I must have some task
for her.

Anael ! not that way ! 'Tis the Prefect's
chamber

Anael, keep you the ring—give you the
sign !

(It holds her safe amid the stir.) You
will

Be faithful ?

An. [*taking the ring.*] I would fain be
worthy of you !

[*Trumpet without.*]

Kha. He comes !

Dja. And I too come !

An. One word, but one !
Say, shall you be exalted at the deed ?
Then ? On the instant ?

Dja. I exalted ? What ?
He, there—we, thus—our wrongs re-
venged—our tribe

Set free? Oh, then shall I, assure
yourself,
Shall you, shall each of us, be in his
death

Exalted!

Kha. He is here!

Dja. Away—away!
[*They go.*]

*Enter the PREFECT with Guards, and
Loys.*

The Prefect. [to Guards.] Back, I say,
to the galley every guard!

That's my sole care now; see each
bench retains

Its complement of rowers; I embark
O' the instant, since this Knight will
have it so.

Alas me! Could you have the heart,
my Loys?

[*To a Guard who whispers.*] Oh, bring
the holy Nuncio here forthwith!
[*The Guards go.*]

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his
post,

With tears i' the eye! So, you are
Prefect now?

You depose me—you succeed me? Ha,
ha!

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom
laughter less becomes
Than yesterday's forced meekness we
beheld...

Pref.—When you so eloquently
pleaded, Loys,
For my dismissal from the post?—Ah,
meek

With cause enough, consult the Nuncio
else!

And wish him the like meekness—for so
staunch

A servant of the church can scarce have
bought

His share in the Isle, and paid for it,
hard pieces!

You've my successor to condole with,
Nuncio!

I shall be safe by then i' the galley,
Loys!

Loys. You make as you would tell me
you rejoice
To leave your scene of...

Pref. Trade in the dear Druses?
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what
yesterday

We had enough of! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
Which you'll need shortly! Did it
never breed

Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
When I, the insatiate... and so forth—
was bent

On having a partaker in my rule?

Why did I yield this Nuncio half the
gain,

If not that I might also shift—what on
him?

Half of the peril, Loys!

Loys. Peril?

Pref. Hark you!
I'd love you if you'd let me—this for
reason,

You save my life at price of... well, say
risk

At least, of yours. I came a long time
since

To the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me
tame

These savage wizards, and reward my-
self—

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate
your crime?

Pref. Loys, the Knights! we doubt-
less understood

Each other; as for trusting to reward
From any friend beside myself... no,
no!

I clutched mine on the spot, when it was
sweet,

And I had taste for it. I felt these
wizards

Alive—was sure they were not on me,
only

When I was on them: but with age
comes caution:

And stinging pleasures please less and
sting more.

Year by year, fear by fear! The girls
were brighter

Than ever ('faith, there's yet one Anael
left,

I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still!)—These
joys looked brighter,

But siltier the town, too, as I passed.

With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt
fathers,

Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the
mine, the oar,

Stealing to catch me: brief, when I
began

To quake with fear—(I think I hear the
Chapter

Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone!)

—I say,

Just when for the remainder of my life
All methods of escape seemed lost—that
then

Up should a young hot-headed Loys
spring,

Talk very long and loud,—in fine, com-
pel

The Knights to break their whole arrange-
ment, have me

Home for pure shame—from this safe-
hold of mine

Where but ten thousand Druses seek
my life,

To my wild place of banishment, San
Gines

By Murcia, where my three fat manors
lying,

Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's
gold,

Are all I have to guard me,—that such
fortune

Should fall to me, I hardly could
expect!

Therefore, I say, I'd love you!

Loys.

Can it be?
I play into your hands then? Oh, no, no!
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the
pit?

But I will back—will yet unveil you!

Pref.

Me?
To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in
Chapter

Shook his white head thrice—and some
dozen times

My hand next morning shook, for value
paid!

To that Italian Saint, Sir Cosimo?—
Indignant at my wringing year by year

A thousand bezants from the coral
divers,

As you recounted; felt he not aggrieved?
Well might he—I allowed for his half-
share

Merely one hundred! To Sir . . .

Loys.

See! you dare
Inculcate the whole Order; yet should

I,

A youth, a sole voice, have the power to
change

Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
Answer me!

Pref.

Oh, the son of Bretagne's
Duke,

And that son's wealth, the father's in-
fluence, too,

And the young arm, we'll even say, my
Loys,

—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying

A novice too abruptly, could not in-
fluence

The Order! You might join, for aught
they cared,

Their red-cross rivals of the Temple!
Well,

I thank you for my part, at all events!
Stay here till they withdraw you! You'll
inhabit

My palace—sleep, perchance, in the
alcove,

Where now I go to meet our holy friend:
Good! and now disbelieve me if you

can:

This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling just
as if I lifted

The lid up of my tomb!

Loys.

They share his crime.
God's punishment will overtake you
yet!

Pref.

Thank you it does not! Pardon
this last flash:

I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinterested Nuncio here—

His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too!
Let me repeat—for the first time, no
draught

Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.
When we next meet, this folly may have
passed,

We'll hope—Ha, ha!

[*Goes through the arras.*]

Loys. Assure me but . . . he's gone!

He could not lie! Then what have I escaped!

I, who had so nigh given up happiness
For ever, to be linked with him and them!

Oh, opportunist of discoveries! I
Their Knight? I utterly renounce them all!

Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio? yes

The same hyacna-groan-like laughter!
Quick—

To Djabal! I am one of them at last,
These simple-hearted Druses—Anael's tribe!

Djabal! She's mine at last—Djabal,
I say! [Goes.

ACT IV

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. Let me but slay the Prefect.
The end now!

To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took: suffice, they served,

Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object.

[*Seeing the robes, &c., disposed.*
Mine should never so

Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee,
Djabal,

Far other moods befitted! Calm the Robe

Should clothe this doom's awarder!

[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least

A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me—I dare take the Robe.

Why not

The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more

Betokens it than rule?—yet—yet—

[*Lays down the tiar.*
[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes!

[*Taking the sword.*
If the Sword serves, let the Tiar lie!
So, feet

Clogged with the blood of twenty years
can fall

Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts!
He'll lift . . .

Which arm to push the arras wide?—
or both?

Stab from the neck down to the heart—
there stay!

Near he comes—nearer—the next foot-
step! Now!

[*As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL is discovered.*

Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?
Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,

And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?

Anael, the Prefect comes! [ANAEEL screams.] So late to feel

'Tis not a sight for you to look upon?
A moment's work—but such work!

Till you go,

I must be idle—idle, I risk all!

[*Pointing to her hair.*

Those locks are well, and you are beau-
teous thus,

But with the dagger 'tis, I have to do!

An. With mine!

Dja. Blood—Anael?

An. Djabal—'tis thy deed!

It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine—

Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess

'Twas not I, but thyself . . . not I have . .
Djabal!

Speak to me!

Dja. Oh my punishment!

An. Speak to me

While I can speak! touch me, despite
the blood!

When the command passed from thy
soul to mine,

I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
And the approaching exaltation,—
make

One sacrifice! I said,—and he sat there,
Bade me approach; and, as I did ap-
proach,

Thy fire with music burst into my brain:
'Twas but a moment's work, thou

saidst—perchance

It may have been so! well, it is thy
deed!

Dja. It is my deed!

An. His blood, all this!
—this! And . . .

And more—sustain me, Djabal! wait
not—now

Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and
me!

It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
At least confirm me! Djabal! blood
gushed forth—

He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd
fall

Prone as asleep—why else is death
called sleep?

Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'Tis
sin, I know,—

Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
Be it thou that punishest, not he—who
creeps

On his red breast—is here! 'tis the
small groan

Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new
life, then!

Too swift it cannot be, too strange, sur-
passing!

[*Following him up and down.*
Now! Change us both! Change me and
change thou!

Dja. [*sinks on his knees.*] Thus!
Behold my change! You have done
nobly! I!—

An. Can Hakeem kneel?

Dja. No Hakeem,
and scarce Djabal!

I have spoken falsely, and this woe is
come.

No—hear me ere scorn blasts me! Once
and ever,

The deed is mine! Oh think upon the
Past!

An. [*to herself.*] Did I strike once, or
twice, or many times?

Dja. I came to lead my tribe where,
bathed in glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:
Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, 'Without
A miracle this cannot be'—I said

'Be there a miracle!'—for I saw you!

An. His head lies south the portal!

Dja. —Weighed with this
The general good, how could I choose
my own?

What matter was my purity of soul?

Little by little I engaged myself—

Heaven would accept me for its instru-
ment,

I hoped: I said, Heaven had accepted
me!

An. Is it this blood breeds dreams in
me?—Who said

You were not Hakeem? and your
miracles—

The fire that plays innocuous round your
form?

[*Again changing her whole manner.*

Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art
Hakeem still!

Dja. Woe—woe! As if the Druses of
the Mount

—Scarce Arabs even there, but here, in
the Isle,

Beneath their former selves—should
comprehend

The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets
That would not easily affect the meanest

Of the crowd there, could wholly sub-
jugate

The best of our poor tribe! Again that
eye?

An. [*after a pause springs to his neck.*]
Djabal, in this there can be no
deceit!

Why, Djabal, were you human only.—
think,

Maani is but human, Khalil human,
Loys is human even—did their words

Haunt me, their looks pursue me?
Shame on you

So to have tried me! Rather, shame on
me

So to need trying! Could I, with the
Prefect

And the blood, there—could I see only
you?

—Hang by your neck over this gulf of
blood?

Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal!
Am I saved?

[*As DJABAL slowly unclasps her
arms, and puts her silently from
him.*

Hakeem would save me! Thou art
Djabal! Crouch!

Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—

Full, midway, of our fathers' trophied
tombs,

Based on the living rock, devoured not
by

The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—
falls prone !

Fire, music, quenched : and now thou
liest there

A ruin, obscene creatures will moan
through !

—Let us come, Djabal !

Dja. Whither come ?

An. At once—

Lest so it grow intolerable. Come !
Will I not share it with thee ? Best at
once !

So, feel less pain ! Let them deride—thy
tribe

Now trusting in thee,—Loys shall
deride !

Come to them, hand in hand, with me !

Dja. Where come ?

An. Where ?—to the Druses thou
hast wronged ! Confess,

Now that the end is gained—(I love thee
now—)

That thou hast so deceived them—
(perchance love thee

Better than ever !) Come, receive their
doom

Of infamy ! Oh, best of all I love thee !
Shame with the man, no triumph with
the God,

Be mine ! Come !

Dja. Never ! More shame yet ?

and why ?

Why ? You have called this deed mine—
it is mine !

And with it I accept its circumstance.
How can I longer strive with fate ? The

Past

Is past—my false life shall henceforth
show true.

Hear me ! the argosies touch land by
this ;

They bear us to fresh scenes and happier
skies :

What if we reign together ?—if we keep
Our secret for the Druses' good ?—by
means

Of even their superstition, plant in them
New life ? I learn from Europe : all
who seek

Man's good must awe man, by such
means as these.

We two will be divine to them—we
are !

All great works in this world spring from
the ruins

Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
Babels men block out, Babylons they
build.

I wrest the weapon from your hand ! I
claim

The deed ! Retire ! You have my ring
—you bar

All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land !

An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then ?

Dja. [putting the Tiar of Hakeem on
his head.] And from this moment
that I dare ope wide

Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion ! for I know myself,
And what I am to personate. No
word ? [ANAEI goes.]

'Tis come on me at last ! His blood on
her—

What memories will follow that ! Her
eye,

Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed
black brow !

Ah, fool ! Has Europe then so poorly
tamed

The Syrian blood from out thee ? Thou,
presume

To work in this foul earth by means not
foul ?

Scheme, as for Heaven.—but, on the
earth, be glad

If a least ray like Heaven's be left thee !

Thus

I shall be calm—in readiness—no way
Surprised. [A noise without.]

This should be Khalil and my Druses !
Venice is come then ! Thus I grasp thee,
sword !

Druses, 'tis Hakeem saves you ! In !
Behold

Your Prefect !

Enter LOYS. DJABAL hides the khandjar
in his robe.

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal !—but
no time for words.

You know who waits there ?

[Pointing to the alcove.]

Well !—and that 'tis there
He meets the Nuncio ? Well ! Now, a
surprise—

He there—

Dja. I know—

Loys. —is now no mortal's lord.
Is absolutely powerless—call him,
dead—

He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!

Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,

Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!
I understood at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes;
I felt

What you were loath to speak—your
need of help.

I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me; have, face to face,
confronted

The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on
him

The enormities of his long rule: he
stood

Mute, offered no defence, no crime
denied.

On which, I spoke of you, and of your
tribe,

Your faith so like our own, and all you
urged

Of old to me—I spoke, too, of your
goodness,

Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth
the Isle

In charge, am nominally Prefect,—but
you,

You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith
had they

In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man?)
That we assume the Prefecture this
hour!

You gaze at me! Hear greater wonders
yet—

I throw down all this fabric I have built!
These Knights, I was prepared to
worship . . . but

Of that, another time; what's now to
say,

I—I shall never be a Knight! Oh,
Djabal,

Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And call you brother! I am Druse like
you!

My wealth, my friends, my power, are
wholly yours,

Your People's, which is now my People
—for

There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
She loves me—Khalil's sister—

Dja. Anael?

Loys. Start you?

Seems what I say, unknighly? Thus
it chanced:

When first I came, a novice, to the Isle...

*Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards from
the alcove.*

Guard. Oh, horrible! Sir Loys!
Here is Loys!

And here—

[*Others enter from the alcove.*
[*Pointing to DJABAL.*] Secure him, bind
him—this is he!

[*They surround DJABAL.*

Loys. Madmen—what is 't you do?
Stand from my friend,

And tell me!

Guard. Thou canst have no part
in this—

Surely no part—but slay him not! The
Nuncio

Commanded, Slay him not!

Loys. Speak, or...

Guard. The Prefect

Lies murdered there by him thou dost
embrace.

Loys. By Djabal? miserable fools!
How Djabal?

[*A Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe;
DJABAL flings down the khandjar.*

Loys. [*after a pause.*] Thou hast
received some insult worse than
all—

Some outrage not to be endured—

[*To the Guards.*] Stand back!
He is my friend—more than my friend!

Thou hast

Slain him upon that provocation!

Guard. No!

No provocation! 'Tis a long devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
He is their Khalif—'tis on that pre-
tence—

Their mighty Khalif who died long
ago,

And now is come to life and light again—

All is just now revealed, I know not how,

By one of his confederates—who, struck

With horror at this murder, first apprised

The Nuncio. As 'twas said, we find this Djabal

Here where we take him.

Dja. [*Aside.*] Who broke faith with me ?

Loys. [*to DJABAL.*] Hear'st thou ? Speak ! Till thou speak, I keep off these,

Or die with thee. Deny this story ! Thou

A Khalif, an impostor ? Thou, my friend,

Whose tale was of an inoffensive race, With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I pledged

My faith before the Chapter : what art thou ?

Dja. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All's true !

No more concealment ! As these tell thee, all

Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough

To crush this handful : the Venetians land

Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part here !

Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have served me more ;

It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,

We are a separated tribe : farewell !

Loys. Oh, where will truth be found now ? Canst thou so

Belie the Druses ? Do they share thy crime ?

Those thou professedst of our Breton stock,

Are partners with thee ? Why, I saw but now

Khalil, my friend—he spoke with me—no word

Of this ! and Anael—whom I love, and who

Loves me—she spoke no word of this !

Dja.

Poor Boy !

Anael, who loves thee ? Khalil, fast thy friend ?

We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux ?

No—older than the oldest—princelier Than Europe's princeliest tribe are we. Enough .

For thee, that on our simple faith we found

A monarchy to shame your monarchies At their own trick and secret of success.

The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon

The palace-step of him whose life ere night

Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet

Shall laugh there ! What, we Druses wait forsooth

The kind interposition of a boy —Can only save ourselves when thou

concedest ? —Khalil admire thee ? He is my right

hand, My delegate !—Anael accept thy love ? She is my Bride !

Loys. Thy Bride ? She one of them ?

Dja. My Bride !

Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes !

She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt !

Ah—who but she directed me to find Djabal within the Prefect's chamber ?

Khalil Bade me seek Djabal there, too ! All is true !

What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this ?

Did the Church ill to institute long since Perpetual warfare with such serpentry ?

And I—have I desired to shift my part, Evade my share in her design ? 'Tis well !

Dja. Loys, I have wronged thee—but unwittingly :

I never thought there was in thee a virtue

That could attach itself to what thou deemest

A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys,

But that is over : all is over now,

Save the protection I ensure against
My people's anger. By their Khalif's
side,

Thou art secure and may'st depart : so,
come !

Loys. Thy side ?—I take protection
at thy hand ?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him ! fly, Sir Loys !
'tis too true !

And only by his side thou may'st escape !
The whole tribe is in full revolt—they
flock

About the palace—will be here—on
thee—

And there are twenty of us, we, the
Guards

Of the Nuncio, to withstand them !
Even we

Had stayed to meet our death in
ignorance,

But that one Druse, a single faithful
Druse,

Made known the horror to the Nuncio.
Fly !

The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
Escape their wrath, O Hakeem ! We
are nought

In thy tribe's persecution ! [*To Loys.*]
Keep by him !

They hail him Hakeem, their dead
Prince, returned :

He is their God, they shout, and at his
beck

Are life and death !

Loys. [*springing at the khandjar*
DJABAL had thrown down, seizes
him by the throat.]

Thus by his side am I !

Thus I resume my knighthood and its
warfare !

Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride
of place !

Thus art thou caught ! Without, thy
dupes may cluster,

Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—
thou art Hakeem,

How say they ?—God art thou ! but
also here

Is the least, meanest, youngest the
Church calls

Her servant, and his single arm avails

To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
Art crushed ! Hordes of thy Druses
flock without ;

Here thou hast me, who represent the
Cross,

Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Ma-
hound, and thee !

Dio ! [*DJABAL remains calm.*] Implore
my mercy, Hakeem, that my
scorn

May help me ! Nay, I cannot ply thy
trade ;

I am no Druse, no stabber : and thine
eye,

Thy form, are too much as they were—
my friend

Had such ! Speak ! Beg for mercy at
my foot !

[*DJABAL still silent.*]

Heaven could not ask so much of me—
not, sure,

So much ! I cannot kill him so !

Thou art
Strong in thy cause, then ! Dost out-
brave us, then !

Heardst thou that one of thine accom-
plishes,

Thy very people, has accused thee ?
Meet

His charge ! Thou hast not even slain
the Prefect

As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet
that Druse—

Come with me and disprove him—be
thou tried

By him, nor seek appeal—promise me
this—

Or I will do God's office ! What, shalt
thou

Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet Truth
Want even an executioner ? Consent,

Or I will strike—look in my face—I will !
Dja. Give me again my khandjar, if
thou darest !

[*Loys gives it.*]

Let but one Druse accuse me, and I
plunge

This home. A Druse betray me ? Let
us go !

[*Aside.*] Who has betrayed me ?

[*Shouts without.*]

Hearst thou ? I hear

No plainer than long years ago I heard

That shout—but in no dream now !
 They Return !
 Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys ?
 Well !

ACT V

The Uninitiated Druses, covering the stage tumultuously, and speaking together.

Here flock we, obeying the summons.
 Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon ! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great fight-word ?—' Lebanon ' (My daughter—my daughter !)—But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza ?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves. Where is Hakeem ?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth : a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this he ? Biamrallah ! Biamreh ! HAKEEM !

Enter the NUNCIO with Guards.

Nuncio. [*to his Attendants.*] Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice
 Ye talk of, that accuseth him ! And tell

Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope :
 Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed !

Lo, this black disemboing of the Isle !

[*To the Druses.*] Ah, children, what a sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage through

To smile their very last on you ! I came
 To gather one and all you wandering sheep

Into my fold, as though a father came . .
 As though, in coming, a father should . .

[*To his Guards.*] (Ten, twelve,
 —Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet ? None ?

The wizards stop each avenue ? Keep close !)

[*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a son's house, I say,

So did I come—no guard with me—to find . . .

Alas—Alas !

A Druse. Who is the old man ?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout !

Children, he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect's slain !
 Glory to the Khalif, our Father !

Nuncio. Even so !

I find, (ye prompt aright) your Father slain ;

While most he plotted for your good, that Father

(Alas, how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain !

[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave—with me,

For being duped by his cajoleries !

Are these the Christians ? These the docile crew

My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er ?)

[*To his Attendants, who whisper.*] What say ye does this wizard style himself ?

Hakeem ? Biamrallah ? The third Fatemite ?

What is this jargon ? He—the insane Khalif,

Dead near three hundred years ago, come back

In flesh and blood again ?

Druses. He mutters ! Hear ye ?

He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man

Is our dead Prefect's friend ! Tear him !

Nuncio. Ye dare not !
 I stand here with my five-and-seventy

years,

The Patriarch's power behind, and God's above me !

Those years have witnessed sin enough ; ere now

Misguided men arose against their lords,

And found excuse ; but ye, to be enslaved

By sorceries, cheats ;—alas ! the same tricks, tried

On my poor children in this nook of the earth,

Could triumph,—that have been successively

Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through—

'*Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi*,
Cretes and Arabians'—you are duped the last!

Said I, refrain from tearing me? I pray ye

Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch

That so much love was wasted—every gift

Rejected, from his benison I brought,
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbour's mouth,
by that . . .

That . . . never will I speak his hated name!

[*To his Servants.*] What was the name his fellow slip-fetter

Called their arch-wizard by? [*They whisper.*] Oh, Djabal was 't?

Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?

Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal!)

How false? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .

Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn . . .

What I sailed hither solely to divulge—
How by his spells the demons were allured

To seize you—not that these be aught save lies

And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,

By measures such as these, he would have led you

Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?

Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?

Druses. Hark ye!

Nuncio. —Be of one privilege amerced?

No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies be!

No! With the Patriarch's licence, still I bid ye

Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!

Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what

Karshook says; he knows but what Khalil says; who knows just what Djabal says himself. Now, the little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began by promising each by-stander three full measures of wheat . . .

Enter KHALIL and the Initiated Druses.

Kha. Venice and her deliverance are at hand!

Their fleet stands through the harbour! Hath he slain

The Prefect yet? Is Djabal's change come yet?

Nuncio. [*to Attendants.*] What's this of Venice? Who's this boy?

[*Attendants whisper.*] One Khalil? Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, but now,

The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?

[*To the Druses.*] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears:

Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?

Doth he abet him in his sorceries? Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid!

[*They spring at KHALIL: as he beats them back,*

Stay—no more bloodshed—sparecluded youth!

Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him)—Whom, my child?

Thou knowest not what these know, what these declare.

I am an old man, as thou seest—have done

With earth; and what should move me but the truth?

Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe? 'Tis I interpret for thy tribe!

Kha. Oh, this

Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear—Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake

The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,

The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?

They'll plant the winged lion in these halls!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] If it be true! Venice?

—Oh, never true!

Yet, Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,

And fain get footing here, stand close by Rhodes!

Oh, to be duped this way!

Kha. Ere he appears
To lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Nor any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark
Ere the Venetians come? Be he cut off,

The rest were easily tamed. [*To the Druses.*] He? Bring him forth!
Since so you needs will have it, I assent!

You'd judge him, say you, on the spot?
Confound

The sorcerer in his very circle? Where's Our short black-bearded fallow friend who said

He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab?

Bring Djabal forth at once!

Druses. Ay, bring him forth!
The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk:

And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!

Where is the glory? Show us all the glory!

Kha. You dare not so insult him!
What, not see...

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are uninstruced,

Untrused—they know nothing of our Khalif!)

—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise 'Tis but to give yourselves the chance of seeming

To have some influence in your own Return!

That all may say they would have trusted him

Without the all-convincing glory—ay, And did! Embrace the occasion, friends!

For, think—
What merit when his change takes place?

But now
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself!

No—could I ask and have, I would not ask

The change yet!

Enter DJABAL and LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!
I had said, pardon them for me—for Anaël—

For our sakes pardon these besotted men—

Ay—for thine own—they hurt not thee!
Yet now

One thought swells in me and keeps down all else.

This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called

Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things

Has said—he is but an old fretful man!

Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—

Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anaël?
—See!

Loys. [*to DJA.*] Here are thy People!
Keep thy word to me!

Dja. Who of my People hath accused me?

Nuncio. So!
So, this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?

A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!

May it be augury of thy after-life!
Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now

That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge

Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*Turning to DJA.*] as these bid me,

Forfeit for murder on thy lawful prince, Thou conjurer that peepst and mutterest!

Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells, children?

But hear how I dispose of all his spells!) Thou art a Prophet?—wouldst entice thy tribe

Away?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!

Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio...

Dja. ... Which how thou camest to be, I say not now,

Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!

—Ply thee with spells, forsooth ! What need of spells ?

If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop

To ratify thy compact with her foes, The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw

Her warrant of the deed which reinstates

My People in their freedom, tricked away

By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave—

—Then will be time to try what spells can do !

Dost thou dispute the Republic's power ?

Nuncio. Lo ye !

He tempts me, too, the wily exorcist ! No ! The renowned Republic was and is

The Patriarch's friend : 'tis not for courting Venice

That I—that these implore thy blood of me !

Lo ye, the subtle miscreant ! Ha, so subtle ?

Ye, Druses, hear him ! Will ye be deceived ?

How he evades me ! Where's the miracle

He works ? I bid him to the proof—fish up

Your galley full of bezants that he sunk ! That were a miracle ! One miracle !

Enough of trifling, for it chafes my years. I am the Nuncio, Druses ! I stand forth

To save you from the good Republic's rage

When she shall find her fleet was summoned here

To aid the mummeries of a knave like this !

[*As the Druses hesitate, his Attendants whisper.*]

Ah, well suggested ! Why, we hold the while

One, who, his close confederate till now, Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,

And every miracle a cheat ! Who throws me

His head ? I make three offers, once I offer,—

And twice . . .

Dja. Let who moves perish at my foot !

Kha. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks ! Oh, Anael, Muani,

Why tarry they ?

Druses. [*to each other.*] He can ! He can ! Live fire—

[*To the Nuncio.*] I say he can, old man ! Thou know'st him not—

Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,

Plays fawning round him. See ! The change begins !

All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm ! Look not at me ! It was not I !

Dja. What Druse Accused me, as he saith ? I bid each bone

Crumble within that Druse ! None, Loys, none

Of my own People, as thou saidst, have raised

A voice against me.

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Venice to come ! Death !

Dja. [*continuing.*] Confess and go unscathed, however false !

Seest thou my Druses, Luke ? I would submit

To thy pure malice did one Druse confess !

How said I, Loys ?

Nuncio. [*to his Attendants, who whisper.*] Ah, ye counsel so ?

[*Aloud.*] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,

Disclosed the treason ! Now I have thee, wizard !

Ye hear that ? If one speaks, he bids you tear him

Joint after joint—well then, one does speak ! One,

Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves, But who hath voluntarily proposed

To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault

Of having trusted him.

[*They bring in a veiled Druse.*]

Loys. Now, Djabal, now !

Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee ! Make a ring, sons !—Speak !

Expose this Djabal ; what he was, and how ;

The wiles he used, the aims he cherished;
all,

Explicitly as late 'twas spoken to these
My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.

Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready,
Djabal?

Dja. Speak,
Recreant!

Druses. Stand back, fool! farther!
Suddenly

You shall see some huge serpent glide
from under

The empty vest, or down will thunder
crash!

Back, Khalil!

Kha. I go back? Thus go I back!
[*To AN.*] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face
the Khalif! Thus!

[*He tears away ANAEL'S veil:*
DJABAL folds his arms and bows
his head: the Druses fall back:
LOYS springs from the side of
DJABAL and the NUNCIO.

Loys. Then she was true—she only of
them all!

True to her eyes—may keep those
glorious eyes,

And now be mine, once again mine!
Oh, Anael!

Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
That blood could soil that hand? nay,

'tis mine—Anael,
—Not mine?—Who offer thee before all
these

My heart, my sword, my name—so thou
wilt say

That Djabal, who affirms thou art his
bride,

Lies! say but that he lies!

Dja. Thou, Anael?

Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance
for me—the last!

Thou hast had every other; thou hast
spoken

Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee
—let me

Speak first, now; I will speak, now!

Nuncio. Loys, pause!

Thou art the Duke's son, Breton's
choicest stock,

Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first
sword:

This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this
trample

To earth?

Loys. [*to AN.*] Ah, who had foreseen,
'One day, Loys

Will stake these gifts against some other
good

In the whole world?—I give them
thee! I would

My strong will might bestow real shape
on them,

That I might see, with my own eyes, thy
foot

Tread on their very neck! 'Tis not by
gifts

I put aside this Djabal: we will stand—
We do stand—see—two men! Djabal,
stand forth!

Who's worth her, I or thou? I—who
for Anael

Uprightly, purely, kept my way, the
long

True way—left thee each by-path,
boldly lived

Without the lies and blood,—or thou,
or thou?

I! Love me, Anael! Leave the blood
and him!

[*To Dja.*] Now speak—now, quick on
this that I have said,—

Thou with the blood, speak if thou art
a man!

Dja. [*to AN.*] And was it thou be-
trayedst me? 'Tis well!

I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
Nor 'tis much evil thou inflict: life

Ends here. The cedars shall not wave
for us:

For there was crime, and must be
punishment.

See fate! By thee I was seduced; by
thee

I perish: yet do I—can I repent?

I, with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy,—and, with, in

turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab

heart—
While these remained in equipoise, I

lived
—Nothing; had either been pre-
dominant,

As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,

I had been something ;—now, each has destroyed

The other—and behold, from out their crash,

A third and better nature rises up—

My mere Man's-nature ! And I yield to it :

I love thee—I—who did not love before!

An. Djabal !

Dja. It seemed love, but true love it was not—

How could I love while thou adoredst me ?

Now thou despisest, art above me so

Immeasurably—thou, no other, doomest

My death now ; this my steel shall execute

Thy judgment ; I shall feel thy hand in it !

Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,

Transcended, doomed to death by thee !

An. My Djabal !

Dja. Dost hesitate ? I force thee, then ! Approach,

Druses ! for I am out of reach of fate ;

No further evil waits me. Speak the truth !

Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys !

An. HAKEEM ! *[She falls dead.*

[The Druses scream, grovelling before him.

Ah, Hakeem !—not on me thy wrath !

Biamrallah, pardon ! never doubted I !

Ah, dog, how sayest thou ?

[They surround and seize the NUNCIO and his Guards. LOYS flings himself upon the body of ANAEL, on which DJABAL continues to gaze as stupefied.

Nuncio. Caitives ! Have ye eyes ? Whips, racks, should teach you ! What, his fools ? his dupes ?

Leave me ! unhand me !

Kha. *[approaching DJABAL timidly.]*

Save her for my sake !

She was already thine ; she would have shared

To-day thine exaltation : think ! this day

Her hair was plaited thus because of thee.

Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel !

Nuncio. *[struggling with those who have seized him.]*

What, because

His leman dies for him ? You think it hard

To die ? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice

Of deaths should suit you !

Kha. *[bending over ANAEL's body.]*

Just restore her life !

So little does it ! there—the eyelids tremble !

'Twas not my breath that made them : and the lips

Move of themselves. I could restore her life !

Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed

On our free converse : we are better taught.

See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem

For her ! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed in mine ! Thou dost believe now,

Anael ?—See,

She smiles ! Were her lips open o'er the teeth

Thus, when I spoke first ? She believes in thee !

Go not without her to the Cedars, Lord ! Or leave us both—I cannot go alone !

I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak : Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal

knew ?

Thou feellest then my tears fall hot and fast

Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not ?

Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou

Exalt thyself, O Hakeem ! save thou her !

Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive

And find me in their toils—dead, very like,

Under their feet !

What way—not one way yet To foil them ? None ? *[Observing*

DJABAL's face.

What ails the Khalif ? Ah, That ghastly face—a way to foil them yet !

[*To the Druses.*] Look to your Khalif, Druses ! Is that face God Hakeem's ? Where is triumph—where is . . . what Said he of exaltation—hath he promised So much to-day ? Why then, exalt thyself !

Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul

In splendour ! Now, bear witness ! here I stand—

I challenge him exalt himself, and I Become, for that, a Druse like all of you !

The Druses. Exalt thyself ! Exalt thyself, O Hakeem !

Dja. [*advances.*] I can confess now all from first to last.

There is no longer shame for me. I am . . .

[*Here the Venetian trumpet sounds—the Druses shout : his eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.*]

—Am I not Hakeem ? And ye would have crawled

But yesterday within these impure courts

Where now ye stand erect !—Not grand enough ?

—What more could be conceded to such beasts

As all of you, so sunk and base as you, Than a mere man ?—A man among such

beasts Was miracle enough—yet him you doubt,

Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—

With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio

Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite !) and, best,

The Prefect there !

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine !

Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he lies !

Exalt thyself, Mahound ! Exalt thyself !

Dja. Druses ! we shall henceforth be far away !

Out of mere mortal ken—above the Cedars—

But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,

Repeopling the old solitudes,—through thee,

My Khalil ! Thou art full of me—I fill Thee full—my hands thus fill thee ! Yestereve,

—Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant

Of all to do, requiring words of mine To teach it : now, thou hast all gifts in

one, With truth and purity go other gifts !

All gifts come clustering to that ! Go, lead

My People home whate'er betide !

[*Turning to the Druses.*] Ye take This Khalil for my delegate ? To him

Bow as to me ? He leads to Lebanon—Ye follow ?

Druses. We follow ! Now exalt thyself !

Dja. [*raises LOYS.*] Then to thee, Loys ! How I wronged thee, Loys !

—Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,

Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus.

Thou, loaded with these wrongs, the princely soul,

The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt

Guard Khalil and my Druses home again !

Justice, no less—God's justice and no more,

For those I leave !—to seeking this, devote

Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life :

And, this obtained then, leave their Lebanon,

My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall

Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)

—One cedar-blossom in thy Ducal cap,

One thought of Anael in thy heart—perchance,

One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,

His last word to the living speaks ! This done,

Resume thy course, and, first amid the first

In Europe, take my heart along with thee!

Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
What shall withstand thee then?

[*He bends over ANAEL.*] And last to thee!

Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
Exalted thee? A vain dream—hast thou not

Won greater exaltation? What remains
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?

Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[*He stabs himself—as he falls, supported by KHALIL and LOYS, the VENETIANS enter: the ADMIRAL advances.*

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the Lion!

[*At the clash of the planted standard, the Druses shout, and more tumultuously forward, LOYS drawing his sword.*

Dja. [*Leading them a few steps between KHALIL and LOYS.*]

On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses! [*Dies.*

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS.

MILDRED TRESHAM.
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
THOROLD, Earl Tresham.
AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
GERARD, and other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME, 17—.

ACT I

SCENE I. *The interior of a Lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S Park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his Mansion.* GERARD, the Warrener, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flagons, &c.

First Ret. Ay, do! push, friends, and then you'll push down me.

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot,

Or a steed's trample, or a coach-wheel's cry?

Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,

Old Gerard!

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.
Here is my place.

Second Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it!

What makes you sullen, this of all the days

I' the year? To-day that young, rich, bountiful,

Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match

With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,

Is coming here in utmost bravery

To ask our Master's Sister's hand?

Ger. What then?

Second Ret. What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she meets

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart

The boughs to let her through her forest walks,

You, always favourite for your no-deserts,

You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues

To lay his heart, and house, and broad lands too,

At Lady Mildred's feet : and while we
squeeze

Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his
train,

You sit o' one side—' there 's the Earl,'
say I—

' What then ? ' say you !

Third Ret. I'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred,
swim

Over the falls and gain the river !

Ger. *Ralph,*
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks ?

Fourth Ret. Let Gerard be !
He 's coarse-grained, like his carved
black cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with
him, look !

Well done, now—is not this beginning,
now,

To purpose ?

First Ret. Our retainers look as fine—
That 's comfort. Lord, how Richard
holds himself

With his white staff ! Will not a knave
behind

Prick him upright ?

Fourth Ret. He 's only bowing, fool !
The Earl's man bent us lower by this
much.

First Ret. That 's comfort. Here 's
a very cavalcade !

Third Ret. I don't see wherefore
Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should
find

Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays ! Would it so
disgrace

Our Family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish
hawks,

A leash of greyhounds in my left ?—

Ger. —With Hugh
The logman for supporter—in his right
The bill-hook—in his left the brush-
wood-shears !

Third Ret. Out on you, crab ! What
next, what next ? The Earl !

First Ret. Oh, Walter, groom, our
horses, do they match

The Earl's ? Alas, that first pair of the
six—

They paw the ground—Ah, Walter !
and that brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel !

Sixth Ret. *Ay—Ay !*

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces : what 's a horse
to you ?

D' ye mark that beast they've slid into
the midst

So cunningly ?—then, Philip, mark this
further ;

No leg has he to stand on !

First Ret. No ? That 's comfort.

Second Ret. Peace, Cook ! The Earl
descends.—Well, Gerard, see

The Earl at least ! Come, there 's a
proper man,

I hope ! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Polo
or Swede,

Has got a starrier eye.

Third Ret. His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone !

Fourth Ret. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely !

Fifth Ret. Here 's Lord Tresham's
self !

There now—there 's what a nobleman
should be !

He 's older, graver, loftier, he 's more
like

A House's Head !

Second Ret. But you'd not have a
boy

—And what 's the Earl beside ?—
possess too soon

That stateliness ?

First Ret. Our Master takes his
hand—

Richard and his white staff are on the
move—

Back fall our people—(tsh !—there 's
Timothy

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—
And Peter's cursed rosette 's a-coming
off !)

—At last I see our Lord's back and his
friend's—

And the whole beautiful bright com-
pany

Close round them—in they go ! [*Jump-
ing down from the window-bench.*

and making for the table and its jugs, &c.] Good health, long life, Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House !

Sixth Ret. My father drove his father first to Court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he !

Second Ret. God bless Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl !

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker !

Ger. Drink, my boys : Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink !

Second Ret. [*Aside.*] He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape !

[*To GER.*] Remember that the Earl returns this way—

Ger. That way ?

Second Ret. Just so.

Ger. Then my way's here. [*Goes.*

Second Ret. Old Gerard Will die soon—mind, I said it ! He was used

To care about the pitifullest thing

That touched the House's honour, not an eye

But his could see wherein : and on a cause

Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard

Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,

Such a point decorous, and such square by rule—

He knew such niceties, no herald more : And now—you see his humour : die he will !

Second Ret. God help him ! Who's for the great servants'-hall

To hear what's going on inside ? They'd follow

Lord Tresham into the saloon.

Third Ret. I !—

Fourth Ret. I !— Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,

Some hint of how the parley goes inside ! Prosperity to the great House once more— Here's the last drop !

First Ret. Have at you ! Boys, hurrah !

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter Lord TRESHAM, Lord MERTOUN, AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,

To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name

—Noble among the noblest in itself, Yet taking in your person, fame

avers, New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,

Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,

Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,

Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name

Would win you welcome !—

Mer. Thanks !

Tresh. —But add to that, The worthiness and grace and dignity

Of your proposal for uniting both Our Houses even closer than respect

Unites them now—add these, and you must grant

One favour more, nor that the least,—to think

The welcome I should give ;—'tis given : My lord,

My only brother, Austin—he's the King's.

Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed To Austin : all are yours.

Mer. I thank you—less For the expressed commendings which

your seal, And only that, authenticates—forbids

My putting from me . . . to my heart I take

Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,

Than the indulgent insight it implies Of what must needs be uppermost with

one Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,

In weighed and measured unimpassioned words,

A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied, He must withdraw, content upon his

cheek,

Despair within his soul. That I dare ask

Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes,

Lord Tresham,

I love your sister—as you'd have one love

That lady . . . oh more, more I love her !

Wealth,

Rank, all the world thinks *me*, they're yours, you know,

To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant

My true self, *me* without a rood of land,

A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,

Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life ?

Guen. [*apart to Aus.*] Why, this is loving, Austin !

Aus. He's so young !

Guen. Young ? Old enough, I think, to half surmise

He never had obtained an entrance here, Were all this fear and trembling needed.

Aus. Hush !

He reddens.

Guen. Mark him, Austin ; that's true love !

Ours must begin again.

Tresh. We'll sit, my lord.

Ever with best desert goes diffidence.

I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.

That I am wholly satisfied with you

On this occasion, when a falcon's eye Were dull compared with mine to search

out faults,

Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give

Or to refuse.

Mer. But you, you grant my suit ? I have your word if hers ?

Tresh. My best of words

If hers encourage you. I trust it will. Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way ?

Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch ;

I have been used to wander carelessly After my stricken game : the heron

roused

Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing

Thro' thickets and glades a mile in yours, —or else

Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight And lured me after her from tree to tree,

I marked not whither. I have come upon

The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,

And—and then . . . I have seen her.

Guen. [*aside to Aus.*] Note that mode Of faltering out that, when a lady

passed,

He, having eyes, did see her ! You had said—

' On such a day I scanned her, head to foot ;

Observed a red, where red should not have been,

Outside her elbow ; but was pleased enough

Upon the whole.' Let such irreverent talk

Be lessoned for the future !

Tresh.

What's to say May be said briefly. She has never known

A mother's care ; I stand for father too. Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—

You cannot know the good and tender heart,

Its girl's trust, and its woman's constancy,

How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,

How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free

As light where friends are—how imbued with lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet

The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus

We brothers talk !

Mer.

I thank you.

Tresh.

In a word, Control's not for this lady ; but her wish

To please me outstrips in its subtlety

My power of being pleased : herself creates

The want she means to satisfy. My heart

Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.

Can I say more ?

Mer. No more—thanks, thanks
—no more !

Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .

Mer. —We'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I'm beneath
the roof

That holds her : while I thought of that,
my speech

To you would wander—as it must not
do,

Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave !

Tresh. With less regret 'tis suffered,
that again

We meet, I hope, so shortly.

Mer. We ? again ?—

Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you
will crown

Your goodness by forthwith apprising
me

When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint
a day

For me to wait on you—and her.

Tresh. So soon

As I am made acquainted with her
thoughts

On your proposal—howsoever they
lean—

A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to
you, my lord.

Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresh. So may it prove !

Mer. You, Lady, you, Sir, take
My humble salutation !

Guen. & Aus. Thanks !

Tresh. Within there !

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM conducts
MERTOUN to the door. Meantime
AUSTIN remarks,

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now ! I'd not think that all was
safe

Because my lady's brother stood my
friend.

Why, he makes sure of her—'do you
say, yes—

She'll not say, no'—what comes it to
beside ?

I should have prayed the brother,
'speak this speech,

For Heaven's sake urge this on her—
put in this—

Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other
thing,—

Then set down what she says, and how
she looks,

And if she smiles,' and (in an under
breath)

'Only let her accept me, and do you
And all the world refuse me, if you
dare !'

Guen. That way you'd take, friend

Austin ? What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour's run
to waste !

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day ?
The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so'

Tresh. (*returning.*) Now, voices, voices !
'St ! the lady's first !

How seems he ?—seems he not . . .
come, faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage !
Down with fraud, up with faith ! How
seems the Earl ?

A name ! a blazon ! if you knew their
worth,

As you will never ! come—the Earl ?

Guen. He's young.

Tresh. What's she ? an infant save
in heart and brain.

Young ! Mildred is fourteen, remark !
And you . . .

Austin, how old is she ?

Guen. There's tact for you !

I meant that being young was good
excuse

If one should tax him . . .

Tresh. Well ?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

Tresh. He lacked wit ? Where might
he lack wit, so please you ?

Guen. In standing straighter than
the steward's rod

And making you the tiresomest har-
rangues,

Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, 'Sweet
lady,

Your cousin there will do me detriment

He little dreams of : he's absorbed, I see,
In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave
My Mildred, when his best account of me
Is ended, in full confidence I wear
My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.
I'm lost unless your gentleness vouch-safes' . . .

Tresh. . . . 'To give a best of best accounts, yourself,
Of me and my demerits.' You are right !

He should have said what now I say for him.

You golden creature, will you help us all ?

Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you

—You are . . . what Austin only knows !
Come up,

All three of us : she's in the Library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast.
Precede !

Guen. Austin, how we must— !

Tresh. Must what ? Must speak truth,

Malignant tongue ! Detect one fault in him !

I challenge you !

Guen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.

Tresh. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-morrow—

Next day at furthest.

Guen. Ne'er instruct me !

Tresh. Come !

—He's out of your good graces since, forsooth,

He stood not as he'd carry us by storm

With his perfections ! You're for the composed,

Manly, assured, becoming confidence !

—Get her to say, 'to-morrow,' and I'll give you . . .

I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled

With petting and snail-paces. Will you ? Come !

SCENE III. MILDRED'S Chamber. A painted window overlooks the park.
MILDRED and GUENDOLEN.

Guen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains. I have not left

Our talkers in the Library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not dared . . .

Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing you

Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood,

Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell—

—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that most

Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were grey instead of blue—

I think I brought him to contrition !—
Well,

I have not done such things, (all to deserve

A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly !

Mil. Guendolen,
What have I done . . . what could suggest . . .

Guen. There, there !
Do I not comprehend you'd be alone

To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor, silly, heartless Guendolen's

Ill-timed, misplaced, attempted smartnesses—

And sift their sense out ? now, I come to spare you

Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and have !

Demand, be answered ! Lack I ears and eyes ?

Am I perplexed which side of the rock-table,

The Conqueror dined on when he landed first,

Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden take—

The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great meed ?

Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes !
Mil. My brother—

Did he . . . you said that he received him well ?

Guen. If I said only ' well ' I said not much—

Oh, stay—which brother ?

Mil. Thorold ! who—who else ?

Guen. Thorold (a secret) is too proud by half,—

Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler

Than we are with our birds. Of this great House

The least retainer that c'er caught his glance

Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk :

And in the world, the court, if men would cite

The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name

Rises of its clear nature to their lips.

But he should take men's homage, trust in it,

And care no more about what drew it down.

He has desert, and that, acknowledgment ;

Is he content ?

Mil. You wrong him, Guendolen.

Guen. He's proud, confess ; so proud with brooding o'er

The light of his interminable line,

An ancestry with men all paladins,

And women all . . .

Mil. Dear Guendolen, 'tis late !
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon

Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.

Guen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings, and receive

One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .

Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun ?

Guen. Not your brother ; therefore,
Not the whole world.

Mil. I'm weary, Guendolen.—
Bear with me !

Guen. I am foolish.

Mil. Oh, no, kind—
But I would rest.

Guen. Good night and rest to you !
I said how gracefully his mantle lay

Beneath the rings of his light hair ?

Mil. Brown hair !

Guen. Brown ? why, it is brown—
how could you know that ?

Mil. How ? did not you—Oh Austin
'twas, declared

His hair was light, not brown—my
head !—and, look,

The moon-beam purpling the dark
chamber ! Sweet,

Good night !

Guen. Forgive me—sleep the sound-
lier for me !

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred !

Perdition ! all's discovered ! Thorold
finds

—That the Earl's greatest of all grand-
mothers

Was grander daughter still—to that
fair dame

Whose garter slipped down at the famous
dance !

[*Goes.*

Mil. Is she—can she be really gone
at last ?

My heart ! I shall not reach the window.
Needs

Must I have sinned much, so to suffer !

[*She lifts the small lamp which is
suspended before the Virgin's
image in the window, and places
it by the purple pane.*] There !

[*She returns to the seat in front.*

Mildred and Mertoun ! Mildred, with
consent

Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's
bride !

Too late ! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter
still

To hope for, that this blessed end soothes
up

The curse of the beginning ; but I
know

It comes too late—'twill sweetest be of
all

To dream my soul away and die upon !
[*A noise without.*

The voice ! Oh, why, why glided sin the
snake

Into the Paradise Heaven meant us
both ?

[The window opens softly. A low voice sings.

There 's a woman like a dew-drop, she 's
so purer than the purest ;
And her noble heart 's the noblest, yes,
and her sure faith 's the surest :
And her eyes are dark and humid, like
the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses,
sunnier than the wild-grape
cluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her
neck 's rose-misted marble :

Then her voice's music . . . call it the
well's bubbling, the bird's warble !

*[A figure wrapped in a mantle
appears at the window.*

And this woman says, ' My days were
sunless and my nights were
moonless,

Parched the pleasant April herbage, and
the lark's heart's outbreak tunc-
less,

If you loved me not ! ' And I who—(ah,
for words of flame !) adore her !

Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate
palpably before her—

*[He enters, approaches her seat, and
bends over her.*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now
her lattice takes me,

And by noontide as by midnight make
her mine, as hers she makes me !

*[The Earl throws off his slouched
hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved !
Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my
hand.

Mer. 'Tis mine !

The meeting that appalled us both so
much

Is ended.

Mil. What begins now ?

Mer. Happiness
Such as the world contains not.

Mil. That is it.

Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses : we—
do we

Deserve that ? Utter to your soul, what
mine

Long since, Beloved, has grown used to
hear,

Like a death-knell, so much regarded
once,

And so familiar now ; this will not be !

Mer. Oh, Mildred, have I met your
brother's face,

Compelled myself—if not to speak un-
truth,

Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as what had e'er prevailed

on me

Save you, to venture ? Have I gained
at last

Your brother, the one scarer of your
dreams,

And waking thoughts' sole apprehension
too ?

Does a new life, like a young sunrise,
break

On the strange unrest of our night, con-
fused

With rain and stormy flaw—and will
you see

No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted
drops

On each live spray, no vapour steaming
up,

And no expressless glory in the East ?

When I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship

you,

Oh, Mildred, can you say ' this will not
be ' ?

Mil. Sin has surprised us ; so will
punishment.

Mer. No—me alone, who sinned
alone !

Mil. The night

You likened our past life to—was it
storm

Throughout to you then, Henry ?

Mer. Of your life

I spoke—what am I, what my life, to
waste

A thought about when you are by me ?
—you

It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon.—'Twas day

with me—

Perpetual dawn with me.

Mil. Come what, come will,

You have been happy : take my hand !
Mer. *[after a pause.]* How good

Your brother is ! I figured him a cold—

Shall I say, haughty man ?

Mil. They told me all.

I know all.

Mer. It will soon be over.

Mil. Over ?

Oh, what is over ? what must I live through

And say, ' 'tis over ' ? Is our meeting over ?

Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love,—with brow

Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips

Which make believe that when they strive to form

Replies to you and tremble as they strive,

It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's . . . Henry, yours that stranger's . . . lip—

With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is . . .

Ah, God ! some prodigy of Thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness

Initiates birth even—some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating—I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,

But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,

The love, the shame, and the despair—with them

Round me aghast as men round some cursed fount

That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not

. . . Henry, you do not wish that I should draw

This vengeance down ? I'll not affect a grace

That's gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever !

Mer. Mildred, my honour is your own. I'll share

Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.

A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer ; time will yet bring forth

Some better way of saving both of us.

Mil. I'll meet their faces, Henry !

Mer. When ? to-morrow ?

Get done with it !

Mil. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow !

Next day ! I never shall prepare my words

And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must

Despise me !

Mer. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro' this protracted agony,
To Heaven ! but, Mildred, answer me,
—first pace

The chamber with me—once again—now, say

Calmly the part, the . . . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)

—Contempt for you in ! I would pluck it off

And cast it from me !—but no—no, you'll not

Repeat that ?—will you, Mildred, repeat that ?

Mil. Dear Henry !

Mer. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more ? And you were infantine

When first I met you—why, your hair fell loose

On either side !—my fool's-cheek reddens now

Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream

—You know we boys are prodigal of charms

To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,

Might speak to her, might live and die her own,

Who knew ?—I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you not

That now, while I remember every glance

Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test

And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,

Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,

—That now I think upon your purity

And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you !)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and
watch

Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if
you

Accorded gifts and knew not they were
gifts—

If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you ?)
if sorrow—

Sin—if the end came—must I now
renounce

My reason, blind myself to light, say
truth

Is false and lie to God and my own soul ?
Contempt were all of this !

Mil. Do you believe . . .
Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you
believe

That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve
o'er

The Past ! We'll love on—you will love
me still !

Mer. Oh, to love less what one has
injured ! Dove,

Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my
breast—

Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee
into strength ?

Flower I have crushed, shall I not care
for thee ?

Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and
device !

Mildred, I love you and you love me !
Mil. Go !

Be that your last word. I shall sleep
to-night.

Mer. This is not our last meeting ?
Mil. One night more.

Mer. And then—think, then !
Mil. Then, no sweet courtship-days,

No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of
sense

From words and looks, no innocent fears
and hopes,
Reserves and confidences : morning's
over !

Mer. How else should love's per-
fected noontide follow ?

All the dawn promised shall the day
perform.

Mil. So may it be ! but—
You are cautious, love ?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the
walls ?

Mer. Oh, trust me ! Then our final
meeting's fixed ?

To-morrow night ?
Mil. Farewell ! Stay, Henry

. . . wherefore ?
His foot is on the yew-tree bough ; the
turf

Receives him : now the moonlight as he
runs

Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.
Ah, once again he turns—thanks,

thanks, my love !
He's gone. Oh I'll believe him every
word !

I was so young—I loved him so—I had
No mother—God forgot me—and I fell.

There may be pardon yet : all's doubt
beyond.

Surely the bitterness of death is past !

ACT II

SCENE. *The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.

This way ! In, Gerard, quick !

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures
the door.*

Now speak ! or, wait—
I'll bid you speak directly.

[*Seats himself.*
Now repeat

Firmly and circumstantially the tale
You just now told me ; it eludes me ;
either

I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you
lived here ?

Here in my house, your father kept our
woods

Before you ?

Ger. —As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating sixty years, almost,
Your bread.

Tresh. Yes, yes. You ever were of
all
The servants in my father's house. I
know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the
truth.

Ger. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .

Tresh. Since when ?

Ger. At least
A month—each midnight has some man
access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. Tush, 'access'—
No wide words like 'access' to me !

Ger. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the
avenue . . .

Tresh. The last great yew-tree ?

Ger. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then
he . . .

Tresh. Quick !

Ger. Climbs up, and, where they lessen
at the top,

—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the Lady's casement—

Tresh. —Which
He enters not ! Gerard—some wretched
fool

Dares pry into my sister's privacy !
When such are young, it seems a precious
thing

To have approached,—to merely have
approached,

Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon ! He does
not enter ?

Gerard ?

Ger. There is a lamp that 's full in
the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's . . .

Tresh. Leave that name out ! Well ?
That lamp ?

Ger. —Is moved at midnight higher
up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane ;

he waits

For that among the boughs : at sight of
that,

I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the Lady's casement, enter there . . .

Tresh. —And stay ?

Ger. An hour, two hours.

Tresh. And this you saw
Once ?—twice ?—quick !

Ger. Twenty times.

Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees ?

Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger
stag

That broke the pale, I saw the man.

Tresh. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the mar-
auder ?

Ger. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was
seen,

In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [after a pause.] You have no
cause

—Who could have cause to do my sister
wrong ?

Ger. Oh, my lord, only once—let me
this once

Speak what is on my mind ! Since first
I noted

All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire, if
I turned

To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire,
If down I flung myself and strove to
die.

The lady could not have been seven
years old

When I was trusted to conduct her safe
Through the deer-herd to stroke the
snow-white fawn

I brought to eat bread from her tiny
hand

Within a month. She ever had a smile
To greet me with—she . . . if it could
undo

What's done, to lop each limb from off
this trunk . . .

All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
I mean, I could not speak and bring her
hurt

For Heaven's compelling. But when
I was fixed
To hold my peace, each morsel of your
food
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place
too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad
in doubts
What it behoved me do. This morn it
seemed
Either I must confess to you, or die :
Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my Lady!
Tresh. No—
No—Gerard !

Ger. Let me go !
Tresh. A man, you say—
What man ? Young ? Not a vulgar
hind ? What dress ?

Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark
foreign cloak
Wraps his whole form ; even his face is
hid ;

But I should judge him young : no
hind, be sure !

Tresh. Why ?

Ger. He is ever armed : his sword
projects
Beneath the cloak.

Tresh. Gerard,—I will not say
No word, no breath of this !

Ger. Thanks, thanks, my lord !
[*Goes.*]

TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,
Oh, thought 's absurd !—as with some
monstrous fact

That, when ill thoughts beset us, seems
to give

Merciful God that made the sun and
stars

The waters and the green delights of
earth,

The lie ! I apprehend the monstrous
fact—

Yet know the Maker of all worlds is
good,

And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold—

Blasting my sense ! There's cheerful
day outside—

This is my library—and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly,
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood

Between his knees to question him : and
here,

Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an
age,—

Has told a story—I am to believe !
That Mildred . . . oh no, no ! both tales
are true,

Her pure cheek's story and the forester's !
Would she, or could she, err—much less,
confound

All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .
Heaven

Keep me within Its hand !—I will sit
here

Until thought settles and I see my
course.

Avert, oh God, only this woe from me !
[*As he sinks his head between his
arms on the table, GUENDOLEN'S
voice is heard at the door.*]

Lord Tresham ! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord
Tresham there ?

[*TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls
down the first book above him and
opens it.*]

Tresh. Come in ! [*She enters.*]
Ah, Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more ?
Tresh. What should I say more ?

Guen. Pleasant question ! more ?
This more ! Did I besiege poor Mildred's
brain

Last night till close on morning with
'the Earl'—

'The Earl'—whose worth did I asse-
verate

Till I am very fain to hope that . . .
Thorold,

What is all this ? You are not well !
Tresh. Who, I ?

You laugh at me.
Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope

Arrived, then ? Does that huge tome
show some blot

In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer
back

Than Arthur's time ?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's
chamber ?

Guen. Oh late enough, I told you !
The main thing

To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,

Content yourself, she'll grant this
paragon

Of Earls no such ungracious . . .

Tresh. Send her here !

Guen. Thorold ?

Tresh. I mean — acquaint
her, Guendolen,—
—But mildly !

Guen. Mildly ?

Tresh. Ah, you guessed aright !
I am not well : there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her
leisure—

That is, at once ! here in the Library !
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say,—
found—

And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly !

Guen. I'll die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have
not gloomed

Some blot i' the 'scutcheon !

Tresh. Go ! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you
choose,—

In the adjoining gallery ! There, go !
[GUENDOLEN goes.]

Another lesson to me ! you might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and
conduct

Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me
catch

The inquisitorial cleverness some praise !
If you had told me yesterday, ' There 's
one

You needs must circumvent and practise
with,

Entrap by policies, if you would worm
The truth out : and that one is—
Mildred ! ' There—

There—reasoning is thrown away on it !
Prove she 's unchaste . . . why, you may
after prove

That she 's a poisoner, traitress, what
you will !

Where I can comprehend nought,
nought 's to say,

Or do, or think ! Force on me but the
first

Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them !

Enter MILDRED.

Mil. What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold ? Guendolen
Thought you were pale—you are not
pale ! That book ?

That 's Latin surely !

Tresh. Mildred, here 's a line—
(Don't lean on me—I 'll English it for
you)

' Love conquers all things.' What love
conquers them ?

What love should you esteem—best
love ?

Mil. True love.

Tresh. I mean, and should have said,
whose love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love ?

Mil. The list 's so long—there 's
father's, mother's, husband's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a
brother's love

For a sole sister must exceed them all !
For see now, only see ! there 's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st
gold

Of other loves—no gratitude to claim ;
You never gave her life—not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, in-
structed,

Enriched her—so your love can claim
no right

O'er hers save pure love's claim : that 's
what I call

Freedom from earthliness. You'll never
hope

To be such friends, for instance, she and
you,

As when you hunted cowslips in the
woods,

Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and
your worth

Is felt, there 's growing sympathy of
tastes,

There 's ripened friendship, there 's
confirmed esteem,

—Much head these make against the
new-comer !

The startling apparition—the strange
youth—

Whom one half-hour's conversing with,
or, say,

Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change

This Ovid ever sang about !) your soul
... *Her* soul, that is,—the sister's soul !

With her
'Twas winter yesterday ; now, all is warmth,

The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,

'Arise and come away !' Come whither ?
—far

Enough from the esteem, respect, and all

The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights ! all which he knows before—

Has calculated on so long ago !
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)

Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place for it,

—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds

All the world's love in its unworldliness.

Mil. What is this for ?

Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for !

Oh, no, I cannot go to it so soon !

That's one of many points my haste left out—

Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film

Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose

A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes

And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours—

So close you live and yet so far apart !

And must I rend this web, tear up, break down

The sweet and palpitating mystery
That makes her sacred ? You—for you

I mean,

Shall I speak—shall I not speak ?

Mil.

Speak !

Tresh.

I will.

Is there a story men could—any man
Could tell of you, you would conceal
from me ?

I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip !

Say 'There is no such story men could tell,'

And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
The world—the world of better men than I,

And women such as I suppose you.
Speak !

[*After a pause.*] Not speak ? Explain then ! clear it up, then ! Move

Some of the miserable weight away
That presses lower than the grave ! Not speak ?

Some of the dead weight, Mildred ! Ah, if I

Could bring myself to plainly make
their charge

Against you ! Must I, Mildred ? Silent still ?

[*After a pause.*] Is there a gallant that has night by night

Admittance to your chamber ?

[*After a pause.*] Then, his name !
Till now, I only had a thought for you :

But now,—his name !

Mil. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit

There be ! 'tis nought to say that I'll endure

And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge

Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire :
But do not plunge me into other guilt !

Oh, guilt enough ! I cannot tell his name.

Tresh. Then judge yourself ! How should I act ? Pronounce !

Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt me thus !

To die here in this chamber by that sword

Would seem like punishment—so should I glide,

Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss !
'Twere easily arranged for me ! but you—

What would become of you ?

Tresh. And what will now
Become of me ? I'll hide your shame

and mine
From every eye ; the dead must heave
their hearts

Under the marble of our chapel-floor ;

They cannot rise and blast you ! You
may wed
Your paramour above our mother's
tomb ;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath
your foot.

We two will somehow wear this one day
out :

But with to-morrow hastens here—the
Earl !

The youth without suspicion that faces
come

From Heaven, and hearts from . . .
whence proceed such hearts ?

I have dispatched last night at your
command

A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow here—thus much is said ;
the rest

Is understood as if 'twere written down—
' His suit finds favour in your eyes : '—
now dictate

This morning's letter that shall counter-
mand

Last night's—do dictate that !

Mil. But, Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said ?

Tresh. *The Earl ?*

Mil. I will receive him !

Tresh. [*Starting up.*] Ho there !
Guendolen !

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome too !
Look there !

The woman there !

Aus. & Guen. How ? Mildred ?

Tresh. Mildred once !

Now the receiver night by night, when
sleep

Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that
receives

Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof
which holds

You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has
held

A thousand Treshams—never one like
her !

No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot
eagerness

To mix with breath as foul ! no loosener

Of the lattice, practised in the stealthy
tread,

The low voice and the noiseless come-
and-go !

Not one composer of the Bacchant's
mien

Into—what you thought Mildred's, in
a word !

Know her !

Guen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at
least !

Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that
she stands

Rigid as stone and whiter !

Tresh. You have heard . . .

Guen. Too much ! you must proceed
no further !

Mil. Yes—

Proceed ! All's truth ! Go from me !
Tresh. All is truth,

She tells you ! Well, you know, or
ought to know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con-
Each precept the harsh world enjoins,
I'd take

Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact

The prescribed vengeance—and one
word of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's
pride

Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my re-
solve !

What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day
forth,

Two scathed things with leisure to
repent,

And grow acquainted with the grave,
and die,

Tired out if not at peace, and be for-
gotten ?

It were not so impossible to bear !

But this—that, fresh from last night's
pledge renewed

Of love with the successful gallant
there,

She calmly bids me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinks her all that's chaste, and
good, and pure,

—Invites me to betray him . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-
deed ?

—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—
(her own phrase)—

This, who could bear ? Why, you have
heard of thieves,

Stabbers, the earth's disgrace—who yet
have laughed,

'Talk not of tortures to me—I'll
betray

No comrade I've pledged faith to !—
you have heard

Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—
tied

By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You'd tempt them to forsake ; and

they'll reply
'Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I

have
In him, why should I leave him then for

gold,
Repute, or friends ?'—and you have

felt your heart
Respond to such poor outcasts of the

world
As to so many friends ; bad as you

please,
You've felt they were God's men and

women still,
So, not to be disowned by you ! But she,

That stands there, calmly gives her
lover up

As means to wed the Earl that she may
hide

Their intercourse the surlier ! and, for
this,

I curse her to her face before you all !
Shame hunt her from the earth ! Then

Heaven do right
To both ! It hears me now—shall

judge her then !
[As MILDRED faints and falls,

TRESHAM rushes out.
Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accom-

pany you !
Guen. We ?

What, and leave Mildred ? We ? why,
where's my place

But by her side, and where's yours but
by mine ?

Mildred—one word—only look at me,
then !

Aus. No, Guendolen ! I echo Thorold's
voice !

She is unworthy to behold . . .
Guen. Us two ?

If you spoke on reflection, and if I
Approved your speech—if you (to put

the thing
At lowest) you, the soldier, bound to

make
The King's cause yours, and fight for it,

and throw
Regard to others of its right or wrong.

—If with a death-white woman you
can help,

Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend

This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
Who said, or thought at least a thousand

times,
'I'd serve you if I could,' should now

face round
And say, 'Ah, that's to only signify

I'd serve you while you're fit to serve
yourself—

So long as fifty eyes await the turn
Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed

wish,
I'll proffer my assistance you'll not

need—
When every tongue is praising you, I'll

join
The praisers' chorus—when you're

hemmed about
With lives between you and detraction

—lives
To be laid down if a rude voice, rash

eye,
Rough hand should violate the sacred

ring
Their worship throws about you,—

then indeed,
Who'll stand up for you stout as I ?'

If so
We said and so we did,—not Mildred

there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,

But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by—by—your meanest

dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in

your face
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your

breast,

And you cast out with hootings and contempt,
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain

Your side, go off with you and all your shame

To the next ditch you chose to die in !
Austin,

Do you love me ? Here 's Austin, Mildred,—here 's

Your brother says he does not believe half—

No, nor half that—of all he heard ! He says,

Look up and take his hand !

Aus. Look up and take My hand, dear Mildred !

Mil. I—I was so young ! Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had

No mother—God forgot me—so I fell !
Guen. Mildred !

Mil. Require no further ! Did I dream

That I could palliate what is done ? All 's true.

Now, punish me ! A woman takes my hand !

Let go my hand ! You do not know, I see—

I thought that Thorold told you.

Guen. What is this ? Where start you to ?

Mil. Oh Austin, loosen me ! You heard the whole of it—your eyes

were worse, In their surprise, than Thorold's ! Oh, unless

You stay to execute his sentence, loose My hand ! Has Thorold gone, and are

you here ?
Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends

of yours will wait Your bidding ; be you silent, sleep or muse !

Only, when you shall want your bidding done,

How can we do it if we are not by ? Here 's Austin waiting patiently your

will ! One spirit to command, and one to love

And to believe in it and do its best, Poor as that is, to help it—why, the

world

Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,

By just such a beginning !

Mil. I believe If once I threw my arms about your

neck And sunk my head upon your breast, that I

Should weep again !
Guen. Let go her hand

now, Austin. Wait for me. Pace the gallery and

think On the world's seemings and realities, Until I call you. [*AUSTIN goes.*]

Mil. No—I cannot weep : No more tears from this brain—no

sleep—no tears ! O Guendolen, I love you !

Guen. Yes : and 'love ' Is a short word that says so very

much ! It says that you confide in me.

Mil. Confide ! *Guen.* Your lover's name, then ! I've

so much to learn, Ere I can work in your behalf !

Mil. My friend, You know I cannot tell his name.

Guen. At least He is your lover ? and you love him

too ? *Mil.* Ah, do you ask me that ?—but

I am fallen So low !

Guen. You love him still, then ? *Mil.* My sole prop

Against the guilt that crushes me ! I say, Each night ere I lie down, 'I was so

young— I had no mother—and I loved him so ! ' And then God seems indulgent, and I

dare Trust Him my soul in sleep.

Guen. How could you let us E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun

then ? *Mil.* There is a cloud around me.

Guen. But you said You would receive his suit in spite of

this ? *Mil.* I say there is a cloud . . .

Guen. No cloud to me !

Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!

Mil. What maddest fancy . . .

Guen. [calling aloud.] Austin! (Spare your pains—

When I have got a truth, that truth I keep!—

Mil. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!

Have I confided in you . . .

Guen. Just for this!

Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!

But I *did* guess it—that is, I divined—
Felt by an instinct how it was—why else

Should I pronounce you free from all that heap

Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours—what other way

Than this, not yours? The secret's wholly mine!

Mil. If you would see me die before his face . . .

Guen. I'll hold my peace! And if the Earl returns

To-night?

Mil. Ah, Heaven, he's lost!

Guen. I thought so! Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?

Aus. Thorold's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.

I watched him till I lost him in the skirts

Of the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone? All thwarts us!

Mil. Thorold too?

Guen. I have thought. First lead this Mildred to her room.

Go on the other side: and then we'll seek

Your brother; and I'll tell you, by the way,

The greatest comfort in the world.
You said

There was a clue to all. Remember,
Sweet,

He said there was a clue! I hold it.
Come!

ACT III

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under MILDRED'S window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM through the trees.

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades

And dells and bosky paths which used to lead

Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering

My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend

Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade

Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,

And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts

Again my step; the very river put its arm about me and conducted me

To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun

Their will no longer—do your will with me!

Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme

Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes

Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.

But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours

No horrid prodigy like this would spring,

Were just as though I hoped that from these old

Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires,

Whose living coral berries dropped, as now

On me, on many a baron's surcoat once,

On many a beauty's wimple—would proceed

No poison-tree, to thrust, from Hell its root,

Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.

Why came I here ? What must I do ?
[a bell strikes.] A bell ?

Midnight ! and 'tis at midnight . . .
 Ah, I catch

—Woods, river, plains, I catch your
 meaning now,

And I obey you ! Hist ! This tree
 will serve !

[He retires behind one of the trees.]

*After a pause, enter MERTOUN
 cloaked as before.*

Mer. Not time ! Beat out thy last
 voluptuous beat

Of hope and fear, my heart ! I thought
 the clock

In the chapel struck as I was pushing
 through

The ferns. And so I shall no more see
 rise

My love-star ! Oh, no matter for the
 Past !

So much the more delicious task to see
 Mildred revive : to pluck out, thorn by
 thorn,

All traces of the rough forbidden path
 My rash love lured her to ! Each day
 must see

Some fear of hers effaced, some hope
 renewed !

Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
 Delights in store. I'll not regret the
 Past !

*[The light is placed above in the
 purple pane.]*

And see, my signal rises ! Mildred's
 star !

I never saw it lovelier than now
 It rises for the last time. If it sets,
 'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.

*[As he prepares to ascend the last tree
 of the avenue, TRESHAM arrests
 his arm.]*

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp !
 Here's gold.

'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd
 pluck

A branch from the white-blossomed
 shrub beneath

The casement there ! Take this, and
 hold your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder,
 come with me !

—Out of the shadow !

Mer. I am armed, fool !

Tresh. Yes,

Or no ? You'll come into the light, or
 no ?

My hand is on your throat—refuse !—

Mer. That voice !

Where have I heard . . . no—that was
 mild and slow.

I'll come with you ! *[They advance.]*

Tresh. You're armed : that's well.

Your name—who are you ?

Mer. *(Tresham !—she is lost !)*

Tresh. Oh, silent ? Do you know,
 you bear yourself

Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
 How felons, this wild earth is full of,
 look

When they're detected, still your kind
 has looked !

The bravo holds an assured counten-
 ance,

The thief is voluble and plausible,
 But silently the slave of lust has
 crouched

When I have fancied it before a man !
 Your name ?

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham
 —ay,

Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
 That he for his own sake forbear to ask

My name ! As Heaven's above, his
 future weal

Or woe depends upon my silence !
 Vain !

I read your white inexorable face !
 Know me, Lord Tresham !

[He throws off his disguises.]

Tresh. Mertoun !

[After a pause.] Draw now !

Mer. Hear me

But speak first !

Tresh. Not one least word on
 your life !

Be sure that I will strangle in your
 throat

The least word that informs me how
 you live

And yet seem what you seem ! No
 doubt 'twas you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face
 and sin !

We should join hands in frantic sym-
 pathy

If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so
lie!

With God's help I retain, despite my
sense,

The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible! Now draw!

Mer. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake!

Tresh. Ha, ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like
yourself,

How must one rouse his ire?—A blow?
—that's pride

No doubt, to him! one spurns him,
does one not?

Or sets the foot upon his mouth—or
spits

Into his face! Come—which, or all of
these?

Mer. 'Twixt him, and me, and
Mildred, Heaven be judge!

Can I avoid this? Have your will, my
lord!

*[He draws, and, after a few passes,
falls.]*

Tresh. You are not hurt?

Mer. You'll hear me now!

Tresh. But rise!

Mer. Ah, Tresham, say I not 'you'll
hear me now!'

And what procures a man the right to
speak

In his defence before his fellow-man,
But—I suppose—the thought that

presently
He may have leave to speak before his

God
His whole defence?

Tresh. Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me.

Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not
have returned

My thrusts? Hurt where?

Mer. My lord—

Tresh. How young he is!

Mer. Lord Tresham, I am very young,
and yet

I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak! and do believe my
speech,

That when I die before you presently,—
Tresh. Can you stay here till I
return with help?

Mer. Oh, stay by me! When I was
less than boy

I did you grievous wrong, and knew it
not—

Upon my honour, knew it not! Once
known,

I could not find what seemed a better
way

To right you than I took: my life—you
feel

How less than nothing had been giving
you

The life you've taken! But I thought
my way

The better—only for your sake and
hers.

And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives

To offer you! Now say—instruct me
—think!

Can you from out the minutes I have
left

Eke out my reparation? Oh—think
—think!

For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?

Tresh. I do

Forgive you.

Mer. Wait and ponder that great
word!

Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of—Mildred!

Tresh. Merton.—haste
And anger have undone us. 'Tis not

you
Should tell me for a novelty you're

young—
Thoughtless—unable to recall the Past!

Be but your pardon ample as my
own!

Mer. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-
stroke and a drop

Of blood or two, should bring all this
about!

Why, 'twas my very fear of you—my
love

Of you—(what passion's like a boy's
for one

Like you?—that ruined me! I dreamed
of you—

You, all accomplished, courted every-
where,
The scholar and the gentleman. I
burned
To knit myself to you: but I was
young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that
love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday
Of praise and gentle words and kindest
looks,
Had taken place perchance six months
ago!
Even now—how happy we had been!
And yet
I know the thought of this escaped you,
Tresham!
Let me look up into your face—I feel
'Tis changed above me—yet my eyes
are glazed.

Where? where?

*[As he endeavours to raise himself,
his eye catches the lamp.]*

Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away!—I'll live—
must live,

There! if you'll only turn me I shall
live

And save her! Tresham—Oh, had you
but heard!

Had you but heard! What right have
you to set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and
mine,

And then say, as we perish, 'Had I
thought,

All had gone otherwise.' We've sinned
and die:

Never you sin, Lord Tresham!—for
you'll die,

And God will judge you.

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied—
That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to
her—

You—not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this—'I love her'—
you don't know

What those three small words mean!
Say, loving her

Lowers me down the bloody slope to
death

With memories . . . I speak to her—not
you,

Who had no pity—will have no re-
morse,

Perchance intend her . . . Die along
with me,

Dear Mildred!—'tis so easy—and you'll
'scape

So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder
deeds

Done to you—heartless men to have my
heart,

And I tied down with grave-clothes and
the worm,

Aware, perhaps, of every blow—Oh
God!—

Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe? Die, Mil-
dred! Leave

Their honourable world to them—for
God

We're good enough, though the world
casts us out!

[A whistle is heard.]

Tresh. Ho, Gerard!

*Enter GERARD, AUSTIN, and GUEN-
DOLEN, with lights.*

No one speak! you see what's done!
I cannot bear another voice!

Mer. There's light—
Light all about me, and I move to it.

Tresham, did I not tell you—did you
not

Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?

Tresh. I will bear those words to her.
Mer. Now?

Tresh. Now. Lift you the body,
Gerard, and leave me

The head.

*[As they have half raised MERTOUN,
he turns suddenly.]*

Mer. I knew they turned me—turn
me not from her!

There! stay you! there! *[Dies.]*
Guen. *[after a pause.]* Austin, remain
you here

With Thorold until Gerard comes with
help—

Then lead him to his chamber. I must go

To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter—did you hear him bid me
give

His message? Did you hear my promise? I,

And only I, see Mildred!

Guen. She will die.

Tresh. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope

She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?

Why, Austin's with you!

Aus. Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

Tresh. There was no fight at all!
He let me slaughter him—the boy!
I'll trust

The body there to you and Gerard—
thus!

Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whither bear him?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,
We shall be friends.

[*They bear out the body of MERTOUN.*

Will she die, Guendolen?

Guen. Where are you taking me?

Tresh. He fell just here!
Now answer me. Shall you in your
whole life

—You who have nought to do with
Mertoun's fate,

Now you have seen his breast upon the
turf,

Shall you e'er walk this way if you can
help?

When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm

Through our ancestral grounds, will not
a shade

Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the
night

Shuts the woodside with all its whispers
up?

But will you ever so forget his breast
As willingly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's
well!

You turn your head! and I then?—

Guen.

What is done

Is done! My care is for the living.

Thorold,

Bear up against this burden—more
remains

To set the neck to!

Tresh.

Dear and ancient trees

My fathers planted, and I loved so well!

What have I done that, like some fabled
crime

Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus

Her miserable dance amidst you all?

Oh, never more for me shall winds
intend

With all your tops a vast antiphony,

Demanding and responding in God's
praise!

Hers ye are now—not mine! Farewell
—Farewell!

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S Chamber. MIL-
DRED alone.

He comes not! I have heard of those
who seemed

Resourceless in prosperity, — you
thought

Sorrow might slay them when she listed
—yet

Did they so gather up their diffused
strength

At her first menace, that they bade her
strike,

And stood and laughed her subtlest
skill to scorn.

Oh, 'tis not so with me! the first woe
fell,

And the rest fall upon it, not on me:

Else should I bear that Henry comes
not?—fails

Just this first night out of so many
nights?

Loving is done with! Were he sitting
now,

As so few hours since, on that seat,
we'd love

No more—contrive no thousand happy
ways

To hide love from the loveless, any
more!

I think I might have urged some little
point

In my defence, to Thorold; he was
breathless

For the least hint of a defence ; but no !
The first shame over, all that would
might fall.

No Henry ! Yet I merely sit and
think

The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must
have crept

Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe ! I crouch away from it !

'Tis she,

Mildred, will break her heart, not I !
The world

Forsakes me—only Henry's left me—
left ?

When I have lost him, for he does not
come,

And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven,
break up

This worse than anguish, this mad
apathy,

By any means or any messenger !

Tresh. [*without.*] Mildred !

Mil. Come in ! Heaven hears me !

[*Enter TRESHAM.*] You ? alone ?

Oh, no more cursing !

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.

There—you sit !

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse—deliver all you come to
say !

What must become of me ? Oh speak
that thought

Which makes your brow and cheek so
pale !

Tresh. My thought ?

Mil. All of it !

Tresh. How we waded—years ago—
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us ; and you
dared

Neither advance nor turn back : so we
stood

Laughing and crying until Gerard
came—

Once safe upon the turf, the loudest, too,
For once more reaching the relinquished
prize !

How idle thoughts are—some men's—
dying men's !

Mildred,—

Mil. You call me kindlier by my
name

Than even yesterday—what is in that ?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my
mind that I

This morning took an office not my
own !

I might . . . of course, I must be glad or
grieved,

Content or not, at every little thing
That touches you—I may with a wrung
heart

Even reprove you, Mildred ; I did
more :

Will you forgive me ?

Mil. Thorold ? do you mock ?

Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say
that word !

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred !—are
you silent, Sweet ?

Mil. [*starting up.*] Why does not
Henry Mertoun come to-night ?

Are you, too, silent ?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and
pointing to his scabbard, which is
empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you !

You've murdered Henry Mertoun ! now
proceed !

What is it I must pardon ? This and
all ?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must
be !

Tresh. He bade me tell you . . .

Mil. What I do forbid

Your utterance of ! so much that you
may tell

And will not—how you murdered him
. . . but, no !

You'll tell me that he loved me, never
more

Than bleeding out his life there—must
I say

'Indeed,' to that ? Enough ! I pardon
you !

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred ! for the
harsh words, yes :

Of this last deed Another's Judge—
whose doom

I wait in doubt, despondency, and fear.

Mil. Oh true ! there's nought for me
to pardon ! True !

You loosed my soul of all its cares at
once—

Death makes me sure of him for ever !

You
Tell me his last words ? *He* shall tell
me them,
And take my answer—not in words, but
reading
Himself the heart I had to read him
late,
Which death . . .

Tresh. Death ? you are dying
too ? Well said
Of Guendolen ! I dared not hope you'd
die :

But she was sure of it.

Mil. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

Tresh. Him you loved :
And me ?

Mil. Ah, Thorold ! was 't not rashly
done

To quench that blood, on fire with
youth and hope

And love of me—whom you loved too,
and yet

Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him ? Oh,
doubtlessly

You let him speak his poor confused
boy's-speech

—Do his poor utmost to disarm your
wrath

And respire me !—you let him try to
give

The story of our loves, and ignorance,
And the brief madness, and the long
despair—

You let him plead all this, because your
code

Of honour bids you hear before you
strike :

But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down !

Tresh. No ! no !
Had I but heard him—had I let him
speak

Half the truth—less—had I looked long
on him,

I had desisted ! Why, as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered
all

The story ere he told it ! I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and
yours

A depth of purity immovable !

Had I but glanced, where all seemed
turbidest

Had gleamed some inlet to the calm
beneath !

I would not glance—my punishment 's
at hand.

There, Mildred, is the truth ! and you—
say on—

You curse me ?

Mil. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing
despair,

Which needs no code to keep Its grace
from stain,

But bids the vilest worm that turns on
It

Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul

of souls ! [*Falls on his neck.*
There ! do not think too much upon the
Past !

The cloud that 's broke was all the
same a cloud

While it stood up between my friend
and you !

You hurt him 'neath its shadow : but
is that

So past retrieve ? I have his heart, you
know ;

I may dispose of it : I give it you !
It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm
me, Henry ! [*Dies.*

Tresh. I wish thee joy, Beloved ! I
am glad

In thy full gladness !
Guen. [*without.*] Mildred ! Tresham !

[*Entering with AUSTIN.*] Thorold,
I could desist no longer. Ah, she
swoons !

That 's well.
Tresh. Oh ! better far than that !
Guen. She 's dead !

Let me unlock her arms !
Tresh. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and
then died :

—You'll let them stay now, Guen-
dolen !

Aus. Leave her
And look to him ! What ails you,
Thorold ?

Guen. White

As she—and whiter ! Austin ! quick—
this side !

Aus. A froth is oozing through his
clenched teeth—

Both lips, where they're not bitten
through, are black !

Speak, dearest Thorold !

Tresh. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight : thanks :
I should fall

But for you, Austin, I believe !—there,
there—

'Twill pass away soon !—ah,—I had
forgotten—

I am dying.

Guen. Thorold—Thorold—why was
this ?

Tresh. I said, just as I drank the
poison off,

The earth would be no longer earth to
me,

The life out of all life was gone from
me !

There are blind ways provided, the
foredone

Heart-weary player in this pageant-
world

Drops out by, letting the main masque
defile

By the conspicuous portal :—I am
through—

Just through !

Guen. Don't leave him, Austin !
death is close.

Tresh. Already Mildred's face is
peacefuller !

I see you, Austin—feel you—here's my
hand,

Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours
too !

You're Lord and Lady now—you're
Treshams ; name

And fame are yours : you hold our
'Scutcheon up.

Austin, no Blot on it ! You see how
blood

Must wash one blot away : the first
blot came

And the first blood came. To the vain
world's eye

All's gules again : no care to the vain
world,

From whence the red was drawn !

Aus. No blot shall come !

Tresh. I said that : yet it did come !
Should it come,

Vengeance is God's, not man's. Re-
member me !

[*Dies.*

Guen. [*Letting fall the pulseless arm.*]

Ah, Thorold, we can but—re-
member you !

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

A PLAY

'Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?'—HANMER.

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN
DOES ROBERT BROWNING;
'WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY TO
GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT, MUST SAY SO.

London, 1844.

PERSONS.

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves. | MAUFROY, { Courtiers. |
| SABYNE, { | CLUGNET, { |
| ADOLF, { Her Attendants. | VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves. |
| GUIBERT, { | PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the |
| GAUCELME, { Courtiers. | Duchy. |
| | MELCHIOR, his Confidant. |

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

ACT I

Morning.—SCENE. *A corridor leading to the Audience-chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY, and
other Courtiers, round GUIBERT,
*who is silently reading a paper: as
he drops it at the end—*

Gui. That this should be her birth-
day; and the day

We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our
liege;

And that this also must become the
day . . .

Oh, miserable lady!

First Court. Ay, indeed?

Second Court. Well, Guibert?

Third Court. But your news, my
friend, your news!

The sooner, friend, one learns Prince
Berthold's pleasure,

The better for us all: how writes the
Prince?

Give me—I'll read it for the common
good.

Gui. In time, sir—but, till time
comes, pardon me!

Our old Duke just disclosed his child's
retreat,

Declared her true succession to his rule,
And died: this birthday was the day,
last year,

We convoyed her from Castle Rave-
stein—

That sleeps out trustfully its extreme
age

On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she
lived queen

Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' court
With joy and bustle. Here again we
stand;

Sir Gaucelme's buckle's constant to his
cap:

To-day's much such another sunny
day!

Gau. Come, Guibert, this outgrows
a jest, I think!

You're hardly such a novice as to need

The lesson, you pretend.

Gui. What lesson, sir ?
That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to
himself ?

Why, no : and therefore, with your
good example,
(—Ho, Master Adolf !)—to myself I'll
look.

Enter ADOLF.

Gui. The Prince's letter ; why, of all
men else,
Comes it to me ?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert ! 'Twas the Prince's ex-
press charge,
His envoy told us, that the missive
there
Should only reach our lady by the
hand

Of whosoever held your place.

Gui. Enough ! [*ADOLF retires.*]
Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain
poor

Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have
gnashed their teeth
At leisure minutes these half-dozen
years,

To find me never in the mood to quit ?
—Who asks may have it, with my
blessing, and—

This to present our lady. Who'll
accept ?

You,—you,—you ? There it lies, and
may, for me !

Mau. [*a youth, picking up the paper,*
reads aloud.]

'Prince Berthold, proved by titles
following

Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this
day

To claim his own, with licence from the
Pope,

The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and
France'...

Gau. Sufficient 'titles following,' I
judge !

Don't read another ! Well,—'to claim
his own ?'

Mau. '—And take possession of the
Duchy held

Since twelve months, to the true heir's
prejudice,

By '... Colombe, Juliers' mistress, so
she thinks,

And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find !

Who wants the place and paper ?
Guibert's right !

I hope to climb a little in the world,—
I'd push my fortunes,—but, no more
than he,

Could tell her on 'this happy day of
days,

That, save the nosegay in her hand,
perhaps,

There's nothing left to call her own !
Sir Clugnet,

You famish for promotion ; what say
you ?

Clug. [*an old man.*] To give this letter
were a sort, I take it,

Of service : services ask recompense :
What kind of corner may be Rave-
stein ?

Gui. The castle ?—Oh, you'd share
her fortunes ? Good !

Three walls stand upright, full as good
as four,

With no such bad remainder of a roof.
Clug. Oh,—but the town ?

Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts ;
A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis
judged ;

And half a dyke, except in time of
thaw.

Clug. Still, there's some revenue ?
Gui. Else Heaven forefend !

You hang a beacon out, should fogs
increase ;

So, when the Autumn floats of pine-
wood steer

Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks
to you,

Their grateful raftsmen flings a guilder
in ;

—That's if he means to pass your way
next time.

Clug. If not ?

Gui. Hang guilders, then—
he blesses you

Clug. What man do you suppose me ?
Keep your paper !

And, let me say, it shows no handsome
spirit

To dally with misfortune: keep your place!

Gau. Some one must tell her.

Gui. Some one may: you may

Gau. Sir Guibert, 'tis no trifle turns me sick

Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
But this goes near it. Where's there news at all?

Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm

He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,

That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;

That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,

And, she away, indisputable heir,
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,

Claimed Juliers?—nor, as he preferred his claim,

That first this, then another potentate,
Inclined to its allowance?—I, or you,

Or any one except the lady's self?

Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
To break the business to her! Things might change:

At all events, we'd see next masque at end,

Next mummerly over first: and so the edge

Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,

Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's she

—Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,

With just the faintest notion possible
That some such claimant earns a livelihood

About the world, by feigning grievances—

Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,

And fewer listen to, a second time.
Your method proves a failure; now try mine!

And, since this must be carried . . .

Gui.[*snatching the paper from him.*]
By your leave!

Your zeal transports you! 'Twill not serve the Prince

So much as you expect, this course you'd take.

If she leaves quietly her palace,—well;
But if she died upon its threshold,—no:

He'd have the trouble of removing her.

Come, genties, we're all—what the devil knows!

You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside—

You broke your father's heart superiorly
To gather his succession—never blush!

You're from my province, and, be comforted,

They tell of it with wonder to this day—
You can afford to let your talent sleep!

We'll take the very worst supposed, as true:

There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child

Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
With whom the right lay! Call the Prince our Duke

There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything

More than a young maid with the bluest eyes—

And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart

Coolly as Gaucelme could and would!
No haste!

His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud—

We'll not advance to his perfection yet—

Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined Maufroy

For ever as courtier!

Gau. Here's a coil!

And, count us, will you? Count its residue,

This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!

A birthday, too—a gratulation-day!
I'm dumb: bid *that* keep silence!

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
He's right: that does say something:
that's bare truth.

Ten—twelve, I make: a perilous dropping-off!

Gui. Pooh—is it audience hour?
The vestibule

Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort

That want our privilege of entry here.

Gau. Adolf! [*Re-enter ADOLF.*]

Who's outside?

Gui. Oh, your looks suffice!
Nobody waiting?

Mau. [*looking through the door-folds.*]

Scarce our number!

Gui. 'Sdeath!
Nothing to beg for, to complain about?
It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast

As thus to frighten all the world!

Gau. The world
Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me

By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,

Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free

To every wind from every compass-point,

And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.

The Prince comes and the lady's People go;

The snow-geese settles down, the swallows flee—

Why should they wait for winter-time?
'Tis instinct;

Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Gui. That's their craft?
And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth,

That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,

Lit up the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!
Well, 'tis my comfort, you could never call me

The People's Friend! The People keep their word—

I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain

The People when the Prince comes, and the People

Are talked of! Then, their speeches—no one tongue

Found respite, not a pen had holiday—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!

Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,

They wince and fret enough, but pay they must

—We manage that,—so, pay with a good grace

They might as well, it costs so little more.

But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next

Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,

In public—there they have us if they will,

We're at their mercy after that, you see!

For one tax not ten devils could extort—

Over and above necessity, a grace;
This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—

Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute-penny,

And crowning attestation, all works well.

Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!
These cappings quick, and crook-and-cringings low,

Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,

With grin that shuts the eyes and opens the mouth—

So tender they their love; and, tender made,

Go home to curse you, the first do it you ask.

As if their souls were any longer theirs!
As if they had not given ample warrant

To who should clap a collar on their neck,

Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,

And take them for the brute they boast themselves!

Stay—there's a bustle at the outer door—

And somebody entreating . . . that's my name!

Adolf,—I heard my name!

Adolf. 'Twas probably
The Suitor.

Gui. Oh, there is one?

Adolf. With a suit
He'd fain enforce in person.

Gui. The good heart

—And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's fold!

Is that a lapet of his cloak, I see?

Adolf. If it bear plenteous signs of travel . . . ay,

The very cloak my comrades tore!

Gui. . . . Why tore?

Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim:

Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts

Lest he should miss the moment.

Gui. . . . Where's he now?

Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more.

They have adoenoughto thrust him back.

Gui. Ay—but my name, I caught?

Adolf. . . . Oh, sir—he said

—What was it?—You had known him formerly,

And, he believed, would help him did you guess

He waited now—you promised him as much—

The old plea! 'Faith, he's back,—renews the charge!

[*Speaking at the door.*] So long as the man parleys, peace outside!

Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!

Gau. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path,

A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.

Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon

He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow

At each repulse—

Gau. . . . I noticed he'd a brow.

Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile

Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress, And presently turns round, quiet again, With some new pretext for admittance.

—Back!

(*To GUIBERT.*)—Sir, he has seen you!

Now cross halberts! Ha—

Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too—

No passage! Whither would the mad-man press?

Close the doors quick on me!

Gui. . . . Too late—he's here.

Enter, hastily, and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.

Val. Sir Guibert, will you help me?

—Me, that come

Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,

To represent their heights and depths of woe

Before our Duchess and obtain relief!

Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:

But not a common hindrance drives me back

On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit

With hope for the first time, which sent me forth!

Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men

and women, speak—

Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile

That I might go the fresher from their ranks,

—Who sit—your weakest—by the city gates,

To take me fuller of what news I bring

As I return—for I must needs return!

—Can I? 'Twere hard, no listener for their wrongs,

To turn them back upon the old despair—

Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—

So, I do—any way you please—implore!

If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?

Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!

—Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,

Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—

Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,

Of the very levity and recklessness

Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.

Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,

Is Cleves forgotten?—Then, remember me!

You promised me that you would help me once

For other purpose : will you keep your word ?

Gai. And who may you be, friend ?

Val. Valence of Cleves.

Gai. Valence of . . . not the Advocate of Cleves,

I owed my whole estate to, three years back ?

Ay, well may you keep silence ! Why, my lords,

You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,

I was so nearly ousted of my land

By some knaves'-pretext,—(eh ? when you refused me

Your ugly daughter, Clugnet,)—and you've heard

How I recovered it by miracle

—(When I refused her !) Here 's the very friend,

—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank !

Nay, Valence, this procedure 's vile in you—

I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,

But politic am I—I bear a brain,

Can cast about a little, might require

Your services a second time ! I tried To tempt you with advancement here to court

—'No !'—well, for curiosity at least To view our life here—'No !'—our Duchess, then,—

A pretty woman 's worth some pains to see,

Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown Completes the forehead pale and tresses pure . . .

Val. Our city trusted me its miseries, And I am come.

Gai. So much for taste ! But 'come,'—

So may you be, for anything I know, To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,

And with an equal chance you get all three !

If it was ever worth your while to come, Was not the proper way worth finding too ?

Val. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—

Gai. —And said ?—

Val. —That I had brought the miseries

Of a whole city to relieve.

Gai. —Which saying

Won your admittance ? You saw me, indeed,

And here, no doubt, you stand : as certainly,

My intervention, I shall not dispute, Procures you audience ; which, if I procure,—

That paper 's closely written—by Saint Paul,

Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,

Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B, and C—

Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence. And launch these 'miseries' from first

to last ?

Val. How should they let me pause or turn aside ?

Gau. [to VALENCE.] My worthy sir, one question : you've come straight

From Cleves, you tell us : heard you any talk

At Cleves about our lady ?

Val. Much.

Gau. And what ?

Val. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.

Gau. That, you believed ?

Val. You see me, sir !

Gau. —Nor stopped Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers

here,

For any—rumours you might find afloat ?

Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.

Gau. This is the lady's birthday, do you know ?

—Her day of pleasure ?

Val. —I know that the great, For pleasure born, should still be on the watch

To exclude pleasure when a duty offers : Even as the lowly too, for duty born,

May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach :

Both will have plenty of their birth-right, sir !

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert, here's your man! No scruples now—

You'll never find his like! Time presses hard.

I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,

But you can't keep the hour of audience back

Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.

[*Pointing to VALENCE.*] Entrust him with it—fool no chance away!

Gui. —Him?

Gau. —With the missive!

What's the man to her?

Gui. No bad thought!—Yet, 'tis yours—who ever played

The tempting serpent: else, 'twere no bad thought!

I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,

Or else...

Enter an Official who communicates with ADOLF.

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the Court!

Gui. Give us a moment, Adolf! Valence, friend,

I'll help you: we of the service, you're to mark,

Have special entry, while the herd... the folks

Outside, get access through our help alone.

—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose So ever will be: your natural lot is, therefore,

To wait your turn and opportunity, And probably miss both. Now, I engage To set you, here and in a minute's space,

Before the lady, with full leave to plead Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C, To heart's content.

Val. I grieve that I must ask,— This being, yourself admit, the custom here,—

To what the price of such a favour mounts?

Gui. Just so! You're not without a courtier's tact!

Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,

Do such as we without a recompense.

Val. Yours is?—

Gui. A trifle: here's a document 'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—

I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points

Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all

And take it? Just say, 'I am bidden lay

This paper at the Duchess' feet.'

Val. No more?

I thank you, sir!

Adolf. Her Grace receives the Court!

Gui. [*Aside.*] Now, *sursum corda*, quoth the mass-priest! Do—

Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone These pushings to and fro, and pullings

back;

Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's arm

The downward path, if you can't pluck me off

Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!

[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and move towards the door.*

After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves

Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace?

And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,

To keep my very gloves fringed properly!

This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross;

Yon grey urn's veritable marcasite, The Pope's gift: and those salvers

testify

The Emperor. Presently, you'll set your foot

... But you don't speak, friend Valence!

Val. I shall speak.

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Guibert—it were no such ungraceful thing

If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck

With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do!

Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword
and cry
'Yield strangers our allegiance? First
I'll perish
Beside your Grace!—and so give me
the cue
To . . .

Gui. Clap your hand to note-book
and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I con-
ceive!
[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or
I shall half suspect
You're plotting to supplant us, me the
first,
I' the lady's favour: is't the grand
harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses
you?
—Which of her virtues you'll apostro-
phize?
Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curl'd, not unbecoming
hair?
—Or what else ponder you?
Val. My townsmen's wrongs!

ACT II

Noon.—SCENE. *The Presence-chamber.*

The DUCHESS and SABYNE.

The D. Announce that I am ready
for the Court!

Sab. 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I
think—your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no
doubt,
And shun the crowd; but few can have
arrived . . .

The D. Let those not yet arrived,
then, keep away!
'Twas me, this day, last year at Rave-
stein,
You hurried. It has been full time,
beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate?

Sab. Forgive me!

The D. Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten
to make sure
Of one true thank: here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its pri-
vilege!

It is my birth's event they celebrate:
You need not wish me more such happy
days,

But—ask some favour! Have you
none to ask?

Has Adolf none, then? this was far
from least

Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself! It seemed so natural
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-
bells,

Should be the power and leave of doing
good

To you, and greater pleasure to myself.
You ask my leave to-day to marry
Adolf?

The rest is my concern.

Sab. Your Grace is ever
Our Lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for
Adolf . . .

The D. 'But'? You have not, sure,
changed in your regard
And purpose towards him?

Sab. We change!

The D. Well, then? Well?
Sab. How could we two be happy,
and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when—when . . . but 'tis
audience-time!

The D. 'When, if you left me, I were
left indeed!'

Would you subjoin that?—Bid the
Court approach!

—Why should we play thus with each
other, Sabyne?

Do I not know, if courtiers prove
remiss,

If friends detain me, and get blame for
it,

There is a cause? Of last year's fervid
throng

Scarce one half comes now!

Sab. [*Aside.*] One half? No, alas!

The D. So can the mere suspicion of
a cloud

Over my fortunes, strike each loyal
heart.

They've heard of this Prince Berthold;
and, forsooth,

Each foolish arrogant pretence he
makes,

May grow more foolish and more
arrogant,

They please to apprehend! I thank
their love!

Admit them!

Sab. [*Aside.*] How much has she
really learned?

The D. Surely, whoever's absent,
Tristan waits?

—Or at least Romuald, whom my father
raised

From nothing—come, he's faithful to
me, come!

(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—
yes,

And fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he

to that?

For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!
[*SABYNE goes out.*

The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere,
and summer too.

Next year 'tis the old place again,
perhaps—

The water-breeze again, the birds again.
—It cannot be! It is too late to be!

What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to
think

Nor care, concern myself with doing
good

Orill, my task was just—to live,—to live,
And, answering ends there was no need
explain,

To render Juliers happy—so they said,
All could not have been falsehood!

Some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all
They looked for: why then cease to do
it now?

Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for
aught I know,

Things change, a claimant may arrive,
and I...

It cannot nor it shall not be! His
right?

Well then, he has the right, and I have
not,

—But who bade all of you surround my
life

And close its growth up with your
Ducal crown

Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me
perishing?

I could have been like one of you,—
loved, hoped,

Feared, lived and died like one of you—
but you

Would take that life away and give me
this,

And I will keep this! I will face you!
Come!

Enter the Courtiers and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy
mornings to your Grace!

The D. [*Aside, as they pay their
devoir.*] The same words—the
same faces,—the same love!

I have been over-fearful. These are
few;

But these, at least, stand firmly: these
are mine!

As many come as may; and if no
more,

'Tis that these few suffice—they do
suffice!

What succour may not next year bring
me? Plainly,

I feared too soon. [*To 'the Court.*] I
thank you, sirs: all thanks!

Val. [*Aside, as the DUCHESS passes
from one group to another, con-
versing.*]

'Tis she—the vision this day last year
brought,

When, for a golden moment at our
Cleves,

She tarried in her progress hither.
Cleves

Chose me to speak its welcome, and I
spoke

—Not that she could have noted the
recluse

—Ungainly, old before his time—who
gazed.

Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and
that gaze

Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her
own!

She was above it—but so would not sink
My gaze to earth! The People caught
it, hers—

Thenceforward, mine; but thus en-
tirely mine,

Who shall affirm, had she not raised my
soul

Ere she retired and left me—them ?

She turns—

There 's all her wondrous face at once !

The ground

Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his paper.*] These wrongs of theirs I have to plead !

The D. [*to the Court.*] Nay, compliment enough ! And kindness, self

Should pause before it wish me more such years.

'Twas fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,

I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,

Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth 's for pleasure :

Mine is received ; let my age pay for it.

Gau. So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your Grace,

Should never go together ?

Gui. How, Sir Gaucelme ?

Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly

At the snatched breathing-intervals of work ?

As good you saved it till the dull day's-end

When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone !

Eat first, then work upon the strength of it !

The D. True : you enable me to risk my Future,

By giving me a Past beyond recall.

I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year :

Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now !

And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of ?

[*As they advance a little, and GUIBERT speaks—*

—That gentleman ?

Val. [*Aside.*] I feel her eyes on me !

Gui. [*to VALENCE.*] The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear your suit !

Advance ! He is from Cleves.

Val. [*coming forward.*] [*Aside.*] Their wrongs—their wrongs !

The D. And you, sir, are from Cleves ? How fresh in mind,

The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves !

She entertained me bravely, but the best

Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by,

With insuppressible joy on every face !

What says my ancient, famous, happy Cleves ?

Val. Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth !

So think my friends : nor do they less deserve

The having you to take it, you shall think,

When you know all—nay, when you only know

How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,

When the poor acquiescing multitude Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart

Into unnoticed corners, that the few, Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,

Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight

With joyous faces fit to bear away And boast of as a sample of all Cleves

—How, when to daylight these crept out once more,

Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags

Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,

That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,

And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them

To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path

—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss

Ebb'd, as their moon retreated, and again

Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare

—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest

'Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp !'—

And as one man they cried 'He speaks the truth—

Show her the horror ! Take from our own mouths

Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too !'

—This they cried, lady ! I have brought the wrongs.

The D. Wrongs ? Cleves has wrongs—apparent now and thus ?

I thank you—in that paper ? Give it me !

Val. (There, Cleves !) In this ! (What did I promise, Cleves ?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced

Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon ! I forget

I buy the privilege of this approach, And promptly would discharge my debt. I lay

This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet !

[*Presenting GUIBERT's paper.*]

Gui. Stay ! for the present . . .

The D. Stay, sir ? I take aught That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride

Than this your Ducal circlet. Thank you, sir !

[*The DUCHESS reads hastily ; then, turning to the Courtiers—*]

What have I done to you ? Your deed or mine

Was it, this crowning me ? I gave myself

No more a title to your homage, no, Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words

In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.

For such a flower, you plucked me ! well, you erred—

Well, 'twas a weed—remove the eye-sore quick !

But should you not remember it has lain

Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,

Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things ?

—That if 't be faded 'tis with prayer's sole breath—

That the one day it boasted was God's day ?

Still, I do thank you ! Had you used respect

Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,

Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet

May yield some wandering insect rest and food.

So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all !

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke, it seems—

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—

Be mine, too ! Take this People ! Tell not me

Of rescripts, precedents, authorities, —But take them, from a heart that yearns to give !

Find out their love,—I could not ; find their fear,—

I would not ; find their like,—I never shall,

Among the flowers !

[*Taking off her coronet.*]

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here !

Val. [*advancing to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert,—knight, they call you—this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court. You dared make me your instrument, I find ;

For that, so sure as you and I are men, We reckon to the utmost presently :

But as you are a courtier and I none, Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed

A second step and risk addressing her —I am degraded—you, let me address !

Out of her presence, all is plain enough What I shall do—but in her presence, too,

Surely there's something proper to be done !

[*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—

May I not strike this man to earth ?

The Courtiers. [*as GUIBERT springs forward, withholding him.*] Let-go !

—The Clothiers' spokesman, Guibert ? Grace a churl ?

The D. [*to VALENCE.*] Oh, be acquainted with your party, sir !

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts;
A lion crests him for a cognisance;
'Scorning to waver'—that's his 'scutcheon's word;

His office with the new Duke—probably
The same in honour as with me: or
more,
By so much as this gallant turn deserves:

He's now, I dare say, of a thousand
times

The rank and influence that remain
with her

Whose part you take! So, lest for
taking it

You suffer . . .

Val. I may strike him then to
earth?

Gui. [*falling on his knee.*] Great and
dear lady, pardon me! Hear
once!

Believe me and be merciful—be just!
I could not bring myself to give that
paper

Without a keener pang than I dared
meet

—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy
here

—No one dared meet it. Protestation's
cheap,—

But, if to die for you did any good,
[*To GAUCELME.*] Would not I die, sir?
Say your worst of me!

But it does no good, that's the mourn-
ful truth.

And since the hint of a resistance, even,
Would just precipitate, on you the first,
A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,
Saving myself indubitable pain,
I thought to give you pleasure (who
might say?)

By showing that your only subject found
To carry the sad notice, was the man
Precisely ignorant of its contents;
A nameless, mere provincial advocate;
One whom 'twas like you never saw
before.

Never would see again. All has gone
wrong;

But I meant right, God knows, and you,
I trust!

The D. A nameless advocate, this
gentleman?—

—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)

Gui. [*rising, to VALENCE.*]—Sir, and
you?—

Val.—Rejoice that you are lightened
of a load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with!
The D. One I have never seen, much
less obliged?—

Val. Dare I speak, lady?

The D. Dare you! Heard you not
I rule no longer?

Val. Lady, if your rule
Were based alone on such a ground as
these

[*Pointing to the Courtiers.*

Could furnish you,—abjure it! They
have hidden

A source of true dominion from your
sight.

The D. You hear them—no such
source is left . . .

Val. Hear Cleves!

Whose haggard craftsmen rose to
starve this day,

Starve now, and will lie down at night
to starve,

Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er
things may.

What curbs the brute-force instinct in
its hour?

What makes—instead of rising, all as
one,

And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or
carbine's trick,

—What makes that there's an easier
help, they think,

For you, whose name so few of them can
spell,

Whose face scarce one in every hundred
saw,—

You simply have to understand their
wrongs,

And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades
are plied,

And swords lie rusting, and myself
stand here?

There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom; tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of
its cure:

And these, embodied in a woman's form

That best transmits them, pure as first received,

From God above her, to mankind below.

Will you derive your rule from such a ground,

Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say, Of this man—this—and this ?

The D. [after a pause.] You come from Cleves.

How many are at Cleves of such a mind ?

Val. [from his paper.] 'We, all the manufacturers of Cleves'—

The D. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—

Are you my subject ? such as you describe

Am I to you, though to no other man ?

Val. [from his paper.]—'Valence, ordained your Advocate at Cleves'—

The D. [replacing the coronet.] Then I remain Cleves' Duchess ! Take you note,

While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,

I stand her lady till she waves me off ! For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold ;

Laugh at each menace ; and, his power defying,

Return his missive with its due contempt !

[Casting it away.]

Gui. [picking it up.]—Which to the Prince I will deliver, Lady,

[Note it down, Gaucelme]—with your message too !

The D. I think the office is a subject's, sir !

—Either . . . how style you him ?—my special guarder

The Marshal's—for who knows but violence

May follow the delivery !—Or, perhaps, My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge

On its receipt !—Or, even my Chamberlain's—

For I may violate established form !

[To VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service ends,

Will you become all these to me ?

Val. [falling on his knee.] My Liege !

The D. Give me !

[The Courtiers present their badges of office.]

[Putting them by.]—Whatever was their virtue once,

They need new consecration ! [raising

VALENCE.] Are you mine ?

—I will be Duchess yet ! [She retires.]

The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet !

A glorious lady ! Worthy love and dread !

I'll stand by her,—and I, whate'er betide !

Gui. [to VALENCE.] Well done, well done, sir ! I care not who knows,

You have done nobly, and I envy you—Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think :

For when one gets a place like this I hold,

One gets too the remark that its mere wages,

The pay and the preferment, make our prize.

Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,

We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist

Without these also ! Yet, let these be stopped,

Our wages discontinuë,—then, indeed, Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,)

Are not released—having been pledged away

I wonder, with what zeal and faith in turn ?

Hard money purchased me my place ! No, no—

I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,

If I had time and skill to argue it.

Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—

If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—

(The kinder of me that, in sober truth, I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . .

Gau. —Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt.

His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,

And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor,

And Chamberlain, and Heaven knows what beside!

Clug. [to VALENCE.] You stare, young sir, and threaten! Let me say, That at your age, when first I came to court,

I was not much above a gentleman; While now . . .

Val. —You are Head-Lackey? With your office

I have not yet been graced, sir!

Other Courtiers to Clug. Let him talk! Fidelity, disinterestedness,

Excuse so much! Men claimed my worship ever

Who, staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives!

Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

First Court. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out!

Second Court. Let Gaucelme speak first!

Third Court. Better I began About the state of Juliers: should one say

All's prosperous and inviting him?

Fourth Court. —Or rather

All's prostrate and imploring him!

Fifth Court. That's best!

Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

Fourth Court. [to VALENCE.] Sir—sir—If you'll but give that paper—trust it me, I'll warrant . . .

Fifth Court. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!

Clug. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first

By virtue of his patent?

Gau. Patents?—Duties?

All that, my masters, must begin again! One word composes the whole controversy:

We're simply now—the Princee's!

The Others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

Sab. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!

Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?

She needs him! Who is here the Duchess's?

Val. [starting from his reverie.] Most gratefully I follow to her feet!

ACT III

Afternoon. SCENE.—The Vestibule

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR

Berth. A thriving little burgh this, Juliers looks.

[*Half-apart.*] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne:

Better try Aix, though!—

Mel. Please 't your Highness speak?

Berth. [as before.] Aix, Cologne, Frankfurt,—Milan;—Rome!—

Mel. —The Grave

—More weary seems your Highness, I remark,

Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched

Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.

I could well wish you, for your proper sake,

Had met some shade of opposition here

—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,

Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.

You must not look for next achievement's palm

So easily: this will hurt your conquering!

Berth. My next? Ay—as you say, my next and next!

Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,

This quiet entrance-morning; listen why!

Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'tis indeed

One link, however insignificant,

Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,

—A link I must secure ; but otherwise,
You'd wonder I esteemed it worth my
grasp.

Just see what life is, with its shifts and
turns !

It happens now—this very nook—to be
A place that once . . . but a short while
since, neither—

When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
Of foreign courts, and bore my claims
about,

Discarded by one kinsman, and the
other

A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this
place

Shone my ambition's object ; to be
Duke—

Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems
now.

My rights were far from being judged as
plain

In those days as of late, I promise you :
And 'twas my day-dream, Lady
Colombe here

Might e'en compound the matter, pity
me,

Be struck, say, with my chivalry and
grace

(I was a boy !)—bestow her hand at
length,

And make me Duke, in her right if not
mine.

Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers
now !

Hearken : if ever I be Emperor,
Remind me what I felt and said to-day !

Mel. All this consoles a bookish man
like me !

—And so will weariness cling to you !
Wrong,

Wrong ! Had you sought the Lady's
court yourself,—

Faced the redoubtables composing it,
Flattered this, threatened that man,
bribed the other,—

Pleaded, by writ and word and deed,
your cause,—

Conquered a footing inch by painful
inch,—

And, after long years' struggle, pounced
at last

On her for prize,—the right life had been
lived,

And justice done to divers faculties
Shut in that brow. Yourself were
visible

As you stood victor, then ! whom now
—(your pardon !)

I am forced narrowly to search and
see—

So are you hid by helps—this Pope,
your uncle—

Your cousin, the other King ! You are
a mind,—

They, body : too much of mere legs-
and-arms

Obstructs the mind so ! Match these
with their like :

Match mind with mind !

Berth. And where's
your mind to match ?

They show me legs-and-arms to cope
withal !

I'd subjugate this city—where's its
mind ?

[*The Courtiers enter slowly.*]

Mel. Got out of sight when you came
troops and all !

And in its stead, here greets you flesh-
and-blood—

A smug oeconomy of both, this first !

[*As CLUGNET bows obsequiously.*]

Well done, gout, all considered !—I
may go ?

Berth. Help me receive them !

Mel. Oh, they just will say

What yesterday at Aix their fellows
said,—

At Treves, the day before !—Sir Prince,
my friend,

Why do you let your life slip thus ?—
Meantime,

I have my little Juliers to achieve—
The understanding this tough Platonist,

Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius—
Lend me a company of horse and foot,

To help me through his tractate—gain
my Duchy !

Berth. And Empire, after that is
gained, will be— ?

Mel. To help me through your uncle's
comment, Prince ! [*Goes.*]

Berth. Ah ? Well ! he o'er-refines—
the scholar's fault !

How do I let my life slip ? Say, this
life,

I lead now, differs from the common life

Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree—

Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—

Enough to care about and struggle for,
In this world: for this world, the size of things;

The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt!

A great is better than a little aim:
And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth

And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,

Was I more happy than I should be now

[By this time, the Courtiers are ranged before him.]

If failing of my Empire? Not a whit!
—Here comes the mind, it once had tasked me sore

To baffle, but for my advantages!
All's best as 'tis—these scholars talk and talk!

[Seats himself.]

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to his Heritage!

Our dutifullest service proffer we!

Clug. I, please your Highness, having exercised

The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,

With much acceptance, as men testify...

Berth. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!

The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded

On strictest justice; if you concede it, therefore,

I do not wonder: and the kings my friends

Protesting they will see such claim enforced,

You easily may offer to assist us.

But there's a slight discretionary power

To serve me in the matter, you've had long,

Though late you use it. This is well to say—

But could you not have said it months ago?

I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—

'Tis slung me—I stoop down, and from the ground

Pick it, with all you placid standers-by—

And now I have it, gems and mire at once,

Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!

Gui. (By Paul, the Advocate our doughty friend

Cuts the best figure!)

Gau. If our ignorance, May have offended, sure our loyalty...

Berth. Loyalty? Yours?—Oh—of yourselves you speak!

—I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!

And since I have been forced repeat my claims

As if they never had been made before, As I began, so must I end, it seems.

The formal answer to the grave demand!

What says the lady?

Courtiers. [one to another.] *First Court.* Marshal! *Second Court.*

• Orator!

Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!

Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he waits!

First Court. Your place!

Second Court. Just now it was your own!

Gui. The devil's!

Berth. [to GUIBERT.] Come forward, friend—you with the paper, there!

Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?

By this time, I may boast proficiency

In each decorum of the circumstance!

Give it me as she gave it—the petition (Demand, you style it)—what's required, in brief?

What title's reservation, appanage's Allowance?—I heard all at Treves,

last week!

Gau. [to GUIBERT.] 'Give it him as she gave it!'

Gui. And why not ?
 [To BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your
 summons thus together,
 And bade me, with the very greatest
 scorn
 So fair a frame could hold, inform you. . .
Courtiers. Stop—
 Idiot !

Gui. —Inform you she denied your
 claim,
 Defied yourself ! (I tread upon his heel,
 The blustering Advocate !)

Berth. By heaven and earth !
 Dare you jest, sir ?

Gui. Did they at Treves, last week ?
Berth. [starting up.] Why then, I look
 much bolder than I knew,
 And you prove better actors than I
 thought,
 Since, as I live, I took you as you
 entered

For just so many dearest friends of mine,
 Fled from the sinking to the rising
 power
 —The sneaking 'st crew, in short, I e'er
 despised !

Whereas, I am alone here for the
 moment,

With every soldier left behind at Aix !
 Silence ? That means the worst—I
 thought as much !

What follows next then ?

Courtiers. Gracious Prince—
 he raves !

Gui. He asked the truth and why not
 get the truth ?

Berth. Am I a prisoner ? Speak, will
 somebody ?
 —But why stand paltering with im-
 beciles ?

Let me see her, or . . .

Gui. Her, without her leave,
 Shall no one see—she's Duchess yet !

Courtiers. [Footsteps without, as they
 are disputing.] Good chance !

She's here—the Lady Colombe's self !

Berth. 'Tis well !
 [Aside.] Array a handful thus against
 my world ?

Not ill done, truly ! Were not this a
 mind

To match one's mind with ? Colombe !
 —Let us wait !

I failed so, under that grey convent-
 wall !

She comes !

Gui. The Duchess ! strangers,
 range yourselves !

[As the DUCHESS enters in conversa-
 tion with VALENCE, BERTHOLD
 and the Courtiers fall back a little.

The D. Presagefully it beats, pre-
 sagefully,
 My heart : the right is Berthold's and
 not mine !

Val. Grant that he has the right, dare
 I mistrust

Your power to acquiesce so patiently
 As you believe, in such a dream-like
 change

Of fortune—change abrupt, profound,
 complete ?

The D. Ah, the first bitterness is over
 now !

Bitter I may have felt it to confront
 The truth, and ascertain those natures'
 value

I had so counted on—that was a pang—
 But I did bear it, and the worst is over :
 Let the Prince take them !

Val. —And take Juliers too ?
 —Your People without crosses, wands,
 and chains—

Only with hearts ?

The D. There I feel guilty, sir !
 I cannot give up what I never had :
 For these I ruled, not them—these
 stood between.

Shall I confess, sir ? I have heard by
 stealth

Of Berthold from the first ; more news
 and more :

Closer and closer swam the thunder-
 cloud,

But I was safely housed with these, I
 knew !

At times, when to the casement I would
 turn,

At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
 I caught the storm's red glimpses on its
 edge—

Yet I was sure some one of all these
 friends

Would interpose : I followed the bird's
 flight,

Or plucked the flower—some one would
interpose !

Val. Not one thought on the People
—and Cleves there

The D. So, sadly conscious my real
sway was missed,

Its shadow goes without so much
regret :

Else could I not again thus calmly bid
you,

Answer Prince Berthold !

Val. Then you acquiesce ?

The D. Remember over whom it was
I ruled !

Gui. [stepping forward.] Prince Ber-
thold, yonder, craves an audience,
Lady !

The D. [to VALENCE.] I only have to
turn, and I shall face

Prince Berthold ! Oh, my very heart is
sick !

It is the daughter of a line of Dukes,
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's
halls !

I shall not answer him—dispute with
him—

But, as he bids, depart ! Prevent it,
sir !

Sir—but a mere day's respite ! Urge
for me

—What I shall call to mind I should
have urged

When time's gone by—'twill all be
mine, you urge !

A day—an hour—that I myself may
lay

My rule down ! 'Tis too sudden—
must not be !

The world's to hear of it ! Once done
—for ever !

How will it read, sir ? How be sung
about ?

Prevent it !

Berth. [approaching.] Your frank in-
dignation, Lady,

Cannot escape me ! Overbold I
seem—

But somewhat should be pardoned my
surprise,

At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
And if, for their and your sakes, I
rejoice

Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your
behalf,

I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Your friends should force me to retrace
my steps,

Since I no longer am permitted speak
After the pleasant peaceful course pre-
scribed

No less by courtesy than relationship
Which, if you once forgot, I still re-
member.

But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Suffer, that through you, I demand of
these,

Who controverts my claim to Juliers ?

The D. —Me,

You say, you do not speak to—

Berth. Of your subjects

I ask, then : whom do you accredit ?
Where

Stand those should answer ?

Val. [advancing.] The Lady is alone !

Berth. Alone, and thus ? So weak
and yet so bold ?

Val. I said she was alone—

Berth. —And weak, I said.

Val. When is man strong until he
feels alone ?

It was some lonely strength at first, be
sure,

Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose
shape—

And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—
each, a man !

That strength performed its work and
passed its way :

You see our Lady : there, the old
shapes stand !

—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chan-
cellor—

'Be helped their way, into their death
put life

And find advantage !'—so you counsel
us.

But let strength feel alone, seek help
itself,—

And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature
hunts

The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid
the waves,

The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,

So turns our lady to her true resource,
Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,

—So, I am first her instinct fastens on !
And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,

The People will not have you ; nor shall have !

It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last,—though that does much,

And men and children,—ay, and women too,

Fighting for home, are rather to be feared

Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—

But, say you beat us, since such things have been,

And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot

Upon a steaming bloody plash—what then ?

Stand you the more our Lord that there you stand ?

Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,

A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—

Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,

A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—

But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,

For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,
We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil !

—Our conqueror ? Yes !—Our despot ?
Yes !—Our Duke ?

Know yourself, know us !

Berth. [who has been in thought.]

Know your lady, also !

[Very deferentially.]—To whom I needs must exculpate myself

From having made a rash demand, at least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
Her chief adviser, I submit my claims,

[Giving papers.]

But, this step taken, take no further step,
Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.

Here be our meeting-place ; at night, its time :

Till when I humbly take the lady's leave !

[He withdraws. As the DUCHESS turns to VALENCE, the Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.]

First Court. So, this was their device !

Second Court. No bad device !

Third Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess !

Fourth Court. —And moreover,
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help

Their loves !

Fifth Court. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do ?

Gui. [advancing.] I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—

Others. And I—and I—and I !

The D. I took them, sirs !

Gui. [Apart to VALENCE.] And now, sir, I am simple knight again—
Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet

That never bore affront ; whate'er your birth,—

As things stand now, I recognize yourself

(If you'll accept experience of some date)

As like to be the leading man o' the time,

Therefore as much above me now, as I Seemed above you this morning. Then,

I offered

To fight you : will you be as generous
And now fight me ?

Val. Ask when my life is mine !

Gui. ('Tis hers now !)

Clug. [Apart to VALENCE, as Guibert turns from him.] You, sir, have insulted me

Grossly,—will grant me, too, the self-same favour

You've granted him, just now, I make no question ?

Val. I promise you, as him, sir !
Clug. Do you so ?
 Handsomely said ! I hold you to it, sir !
 You'll get me reinstated in my office
 As you will Guibert !

The D. I would be alone !

*[They begin to retire slowly : as
 VALENCE is about to follow—]*

Alone, sir—only with my heart,—you
 stay !

Gau. You hear that ? Ah, light
 breaks upon me ! Cleves—

It was at Cleves some man harangued
 us all—

With great effect,—so those who
 listened said,

My thoughts being busy elsewhere :
 was this he ?

Guibert,—your strange, disinterested
 man !

Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend !
 The modest worth you mean to patro-
 nize !

He cares about no Duchesses, not he—
 His sole contest is with the wrongs of
 Cleves !

What, Guibert ? What, it breaks on
 you at last ?

Gui. Would this hall's floor were a
 mine's roof !—I'd back

And in her very face . . .

Gau. Apply the match
 That fired the train,—and where would
 you be, pray ?

Gui. With him !

Gau. Stand, rather, safe
 outside with me !

The mine's charged—shall I furnish
 you the match

And place you properly ?—To the ante-
 chamber !

Gui. Can you ?

Gau. Try me !—Your
 friend's in fortune !

Gui. Quick—
 To the antechamber !—He is pale with
 bliss !

Gau. No wonder ! Mark her eyes !

Gui. To the antechamber !

[The Courtiers retire.]

The D. Sir, could you know all you
 have done for me

You were content ! You spoke, and I
 am saved !

Val. Be not too sanguine, Lady !
 Ere you dream,

That transient flush of generosity
 Fades off, perchance ! The man, be-
 side, is gone,—

Whom we might bend ; but see, the
 papers here—

Inalterably his requirement stays,
 And cold hard words have we to deal
 with now.

In that large eye there seemed a latent
 pride,

To self-denial not incompetent,
 But very like to hold itself dispensed
 From such a grace : however, let us
 hope !

He is a noble spirit in noble form.
 I wish he less had bent that brow to
 smile

As with the fancy how he could sub-
 ject

Himself upon occasion to—himself !
 From rudeness, violence, you rest
 secure ;

But do not think your Duchy rescued
 yet !

The D. You,—who have opened a
 new world to me,

Will never take the faded language up
 Of that I leave ? My Duchy—keeping
 it,

Or losing it—is that my sole world
 now ?

I'al. Ill have I spoken if you thence
 despise

Juliers ; although the lowest, on true
 grounds,

Be worth more than the highest rule,
 on false :

Aspire to rule, on the true grounds !

The D. Nay, hear—
 False, I will never—rash, I would not
 be !

This is indeed my Birthday,—soul and
 body,

Its hours have done on me the work of
 years.

You hold the requisition : ponder it !
 If I have right, my duty's plain : if
 he—

Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice !

At night you meet the Prince; meet me at eve:

Till when, farewell! This discomposes you?

Believe in your own nature, and its force

Of renovating mine. I take my stand

Only as under me the earth is firm:

So, prove the first step stable, all will prove!

That first, I choose—[*laying her hand on his*],—the next to take, choose you! [*She withdraws.*]

Val. [*after a pause.*] What drew down this on me? On me, dead once,

She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and emprise,

Burst into life before her, as she bids Who needs them! Whither will this reach, where end?

Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet she's above—

So very far above me! All's too plain:

I served her when the others sank away,

And she rewards me as such souls reward—

The changed voice, the suffusion of the cheek,

The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,

—Reward, that's little, in her generous thought,

Though all to me . . .

I cannot so disclaim Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is!

She loves me!

[*Looking at the Prince's papers.*]—Which love, these, perchance, forbid.

Can I decide against myself—pronounce

She is the Duchess and no mate for me?

—Cleves, help me! Teach me,—every haggard face,—

To sorrow and endure! I will do right

Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV

Evening.—SCENE. *An Antechamber.*

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now then, that we may speak—how spring this mine?

Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match? He cools!

Not so friend Valence with the Duchess there!

'Stay, Valence! are not you my better self?'

And her cheek mantled—

Gui. Well, she loves him, sir: And more,—since you will have it I grow cool,—

She's right: he's worth it.

Gau. For his deeds to-day?

Say so!

Gui. What should I say beside?

Gau. Not this—For friendship's sake leave this for me to say—

That we're the dupes of an egregious cheat!

This plain, unpractised suitor, who found way

To the Duchess through the merest die's turn-up—

A year ago, had seen her and been seen, Loved and been loved.

Gui. Impossible!

Gau. —Nor say, How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover,

Was this which—taking not their stand on facts

Boldly, for that had been endurable, But, worming on their way by craft,

they choose Resort to, rather,—and which you and we,

Sheep-like, assist them in the playing off!

The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,

Not on the honest ground of preference, Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—

But as we all had started equally, And at the close of a fair race he proved

The only valiant, sage, and loyal man.

Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—

The careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—

She had a hero in reserve! What risk
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
Who brings his claims for her to ratify
—He's just her puppet for the nonce!
You'll see,—

Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
Against him: off goes the confederate:
As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

The Chancellor. You run too fast:
her hand, no subject takes.

Do not our archives hold her father's
will?

That will provides against such accident,

And gives next heir, Prince Berthold,
the reversion

Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding
so.

Gau. I know that, well as you,—but
does the Prince?

Knows Berthold, think you, that this
plan, he helps,

For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
If crowned with the success which
seems its due,

In making him the very thing he plays,
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
He is next heir.

The Chan. Incontrovertibly.

Gau. Guibert, your match, now, to
the train!

Gui. Enough!
I'm with you: selfishness is best again!
I thought of turning honest—what a
dream!

Let's wake now!

Gau. Selfish, friend, you
never were:

'Twas but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
But now that you're grown wiser,
what's our course?

Gui. —Wait, I suppose, till Valence
weds our lady,

And then, if we must needs revenge our-
selves,
Apprise the Prince.

Gau. —The Prince, ere then dis-
missed

With thanks for playing his mock part
so well?

Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very
night—

Ere he accepts his dole and goes his
way,

Explain how such a marriage makes him
Duke,

Then trust his gratitude for the sur-
prise!

Gui. —Our lady wedding Valence all
the same

As if the penalty were undisclosed!

Good! If she loves, she'll not disown
her love,

Throw Valence up. I wonder you see
that.

Gau. The shame of it—the sudden-
ness and shame!

Within her, the inclining heart—with-
out,

A terrible array of witnesses—

And Valence by, to keep her to her
word,

With Berthold's indignation or disgust!
We'll try it!—Not that we can venture
much.

Her confidence we've lost for ever.—
Berthold's

Is all to gain!

Gui. To-night, then, venture we!
Yet—if lost confidence might be re-
newed?

Gau. Never in noble natures! With
the base ones,—

Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smart-
ing-while,

And something grows and grows and
gets to be

A mimic of the lost joint, just so like

As keeps in mind it never, never will

Replace its predecessor! Crabs do
that:

But lop the lion's foot—and . . .

Gui. To the Prince!

Gau. [*Aside.*] And come what will to
the lion's foot, I pay you,

My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to
pay!

[*Aloud.*] Footsteps! Himself! 'Tis
Valence breaks on us,

Exulting that their scheme succeeds.

We'll hence—

And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first—

Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!

Clug. [to GAUCELME as they retire.]

You have not smiled so since your father died!

As they retire, enter VALENCE with papers.

Val. So must it be! I have examined these

With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,

Keeping her image almost wholly off, Setting upon myself determined watch, Repelling to the uttermost his claims, And the result is . . . all men would pronounce

And not I, only, the result to be— Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right

To the distinction which divided us, But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,

Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,

To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 'tis gained,

Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.

—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be?

Eject it from your heart, her home!— It stays!

Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!

—Do my poor townsmen so esteem it? Clèves,—

I need not your pale faces! This, reward

For service done to you? Too horrible! I never served you: 'twas myself I served!

Nay, served not—rather saved from punishment

Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now!

My life continues yours, and your life, mine.

But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—

Clèves!—if I breathe no prayer for it— if she,

[*Footsteps without.*]

Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—

Will Clèves require, that, turning thus to her,

I . . .

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir—I did not look for you Till night, in the Hall; nor have as yet declared

My judgment to the lady.

Berth. So I hoped.

Val. And yet I scarcely know why that should check

The frank disclosure of it first to you— What her right seems, and what, in consequence,

She will decide on—

Berth. That I need not ask.

Val. You need not: I have proved the lady's mind—

And, justice being to do, dare act for her.

Berth. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.

Val. Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture

Bear herself bravely! she no whit depends

On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,

She had adorned . . .

Berth. A cottage—in what book Have I read that, of every queen that lived?

A throne? You have not been instructed, sure,

To forestall my request?

Val. 'Tis granted, sir— My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized

Your claims . . .

Berth. Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred!

I come, before the hour appointed me, To pray you let those claims at present

rest,

In favour of a new and stronger one.

Val. You shall not need a stronger: on the part

Of the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices : yours is
clear.

Propose !

Berth. I offer her my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's, yourself say ; and,
at no far time,
Something here whispers me—the
Emperor's.

The lady's mind is noble ; which in-
duced

This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say !

Val. Your hand !

Berth. (He will fall down
and kiss it next !)

Sir, this astonishment 's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth
so cheap.

Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is
blood—

The daughter of the Burgraves, Land-
graves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter ; I shall scarce
gainsay !

Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must
rule :

Like the imperial crown's great chryso-
prase,

They talk of—somewhat out of keeping
there,

And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.

Val. You wed the Duchess ?

Berth. Cry you mercy, friend !
Will the match influence many fortunes
here ?

A natural solicitude enough !

Be certain, no bad chance it proves for
you !

However high you take your present
stand,

There 's prospect of a higher still
remove—

For Juliers will not be my resting-place,
And, when I have to choose a sub-
stitute

To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you.
You need not give your mates a charac-
ter !

And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
The grey smooth Chamberlain : he'd
hesitate

A doubt his lady could demean herself
So low as to accept me. Courage, sir !
I like your method better : feeling's play
Is franker much, and flatters me beside.

Val. I am to say, you love her ?

Berth. Say that too !
Love has no great concernment, thinks
the world,

With a Duke's marriage. How go
precedents

In Juliers' story—how use Juliers'
Dukes ?

I see you have them here in goodly
row ;

You must be Luitpold,—ay, a stalwart
sire !

—Say, I have been arrested suddenly
In my ambition's course, its rocky

course,
By this sweet flower : I fain would
gather it

And then proceed—so say and speedily
—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's
brazen self !)

Enough, sir : you possess my mind, I
think.

This is my claim, the others being with-
drawn,

And to this be it that, in the Hall to-
night,

Your lady's answer comes ; till when,
farewell !

[He retires.]

Val. [after a pause.] The heavens and
earth stay as they were ; my
heart

Beats as it beat : the truth remains the
truth !

What falls away, then, if not faith in
her ?

Was it my faith, that she could esti-
mate

Love's value,—and, such faith still
guiding me,

Dare I now test her ?—or grew faith so
strong

Solely because no power of test was
mine ?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir ! Ah, you turn
away : all 's over !

But you are sorry for me ? be not so !
What I might have become, and never
was,

Regret with me ; what I have merely
been,

Rejoice I am no longer ; what I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
Hope that I am,—for, once my rights
proved void,

This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot hence-
forth !

Val. And what a lot is Berthold's !

The D. How of him ?

Val. He gathers earth's whole good
into his arms,

Standing, as man now, stately, strong
and wise—

Marching to fortune, not surprised by
her.

One great aim, like a guiding-star,
above—

Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateli-
ness, to lift

His manhood to the height that takes
the prize ;

A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
He rashly spring to seize it—nor
remote,

So that he rest upon his path content :
But day by day, while shimmering
grows shine,

And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the
strength,

To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the
grave.

After this star, out of a night he springs ;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of
thrones

He quits ; so, mounting, feels each step
he mounts,

Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good :—with the
world, each gift

Of God and man,—reality, tradition,
Fancy and fact—so well environ him,
That as a mystic panoply they serve—
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
And work his purpose out with half the
world,

While he, their master, dexterously
slipt

From such encumbrance, is meantime
employed

With his own prowess on the other half.
Thus shall he prosper, every day's
success

Adding, to what is he, a solid strength—
An aery might to what encircles him,
Till at the last, so life's routine lends
help,

That as the Emperor only breathes and
moves,

His shadow shall be watched, his step
or stalk

Become a comfort or a portent, how
He trails his ermine take significance,—

Till even his power shall cease to be
most power,

And men shall dread his weakness
more, nor dare

Peril their earth its bravest, first and
best,

Its typified invincibility.

Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he
ends—

The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthy world !

The D. Some such a fortune I had
dreamed should rise

Out of my own—that is, above my
power

Seemed other, greater potencies to
stretch—

Val. For you ?

The D. It was not I moved
there, I think :

But one I could,—though constantly
beside,

And aye approaching,—still keep dis-
tant from,

And so adore. 'Twas a man moved
there !

Val. Who ?

The D. I felt the spirit, never saw the
face.

Val. See it ! 'Tis Berthold's ! He
enables you

To realize your vision.

The D. Berthold ?

Val. Duke—
Emperor to be : he proffers you his
hand.

The D. Generous and princely !

Val. He is all of this

The D. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake! no hand
Degrades me!

Val. You accept the proffered hand?

The D. That he should love me!

Val. 'Loved' I did not say!
Had that been—love might so incline
the Prince

To the world's good, the world that's
at his foot,—

I do not know, this moment, I should
dare

Desire that you refused the world—and
Cleves—

The sacrifice he asks.

The D. Not love me, sir?

Val. He scarce affirmed it.

The D. May not deeds affirm?

Val. What does he? . . . Yes, yes,
very much he does!

All the shame saved, he thinks, and
sorrow saved—

Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that's deeper than we dream,
perchance!

The D. Is not this love?

Val. So very much he does!
For look, you can descend now grace-
fully:

All doubts are banished, that the world
might have,

Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-
time,

May call up of your heart's sincereness
now.

To such, reply, 'I could have kept my
rule—

Increased it to the utmost of my
dreams—

Yet I abjured it! This, he does for you:
It is munificently much!

The D. Still 'much'!
But why is it not love, sir? Answer
me!

Val. Because not one of Berthold's
words and looks

Had gone with love's presentment of a
flower

To the beloved: because bold con-
fidence,

Open superiority, free pride—

Love owns not, yet were all that
Berthold owned:

Because where reason, even, finds no
flaw,

Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

The D. You reason, then, and doubt?

Val. I love, and know.

The D. You love?—How strange!
I never cast a thought

On that! Just see our selfishness!
you seemed

So much my own . . . I had no ground—
and yet,

I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed it.

Val. Lady,

I am yours wholly.

The D. Oh, no, no, not mine!

'Tis not the same now, never more can
be!

—Your first love, doubtless! Well,
what's gone from me?

What have I lost in you?

Val. My heart replies—

No loss there! So, to Berthold back
again!

This offer of his hand, he bids me
make—

Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.

The D. She's . . . yes, she must be
very fair for you!

Val. I am a simple Advocate of
Cleves.

The D. You! With the heart and
brain that so helped me,

I fancied them exclusively my own,
Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!

She must be . . . tell me, is she very
fair?

Val. Most fair, beyond conception or
belief!

The D. Black eyes?—no matter!
Colombe, the world leads

Its life without you, whom your friends
professed

The only woman—see how true they
spoke!

One lived this while, who never saw
your face,

Nor heard your voice—unless . . . Is she
from Cleves?

Val. Cleves knows her well!

The D. Ah—just a fancy, now!
When you poured forth the wrongs of
Cleves,—I said,

—Thought, that is, afterward . . .

Val. You thought of me ?

The D. Of whom else ? Only such great cause, I thought, For such effect : see what true love can do !

Cleves is his love !—I almost fear to ask . . . And will not. This is idling : to our work !

Admit before the Prince, without reserve,

My claims misgrounded ; then may follow better

. . . When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,

Was she in your mind ?

Val. All done was done for her

—To humble me !

The D. She will be proud at least !

Val. She ?

The D. When you tell her.

Val. That will never be.

The D. How—are there sweeter things you hope to tell ?

No, sir ! You counselled me,—I counsel you

In the one point I—any woman—can ! Your worth, the first thing ; let her own come next—

Say what you did through her, and she through you—

The praises of her beauty afterward !

Will you ?

Val. I dare not.

The D. Dare not .

Val. She I love

Suspects not such a love in me.

The D. You jest !

Val. The lady is above me and away !

Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,

And the great heart, combine to press me low—

But all the world calls rank divides us.

The D. Rank ?

Now grant me patience ! Here's a man declares

Oracularly in another's case—

Sees the true value and the false, for them—

Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see !

You called my court's love worthless—so it turned :

I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,

And here you stickle for a piece or two !

First—has she seen you ?

Val. Yes.

The D. She loves you, then.

Val. One flash of hope burst ; then succeeded night :

And all's at darkest now. Impossible !

The D. We'll try : you are—so to speak—my subject yet ?

Val. As ever—to the death !

The D. Obey me, then !

Val. I must.

The D. Approach her, and . . .

No ! First of all

Get more assurance. ' My instructress,' say,

' Was great, descended from a line of kings,

And even fair'—(wait why I say this folly)—

' She said, of all men, none for eloquence,

Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)

The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him

Who saved her at her need : if she said this,

What should not one I love, say ? '

Val. Heaven—this hope—

Oh, lady, you are filling me with fire !

The D. Say this !—nor think I bid

you cast aside

One touch of all the awe and reverence !

Nay—make her proud for once to heart's content

That all this wealth of heart and soul's her own !

Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,

. . . (Obey !)

Val. I cannot choose.

The D. Then, kneel to her !

[VALENCE sinks on his knee.]

I dream !

Val. Have mercy ! Yours, unto the death,—

I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die.

The D. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus ?

Even with you as with the world? I know
 This morning's service was no vulgar deed
 Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
 Explains all done and infinitely more,
 So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.
 Your service named its true source,—loyalty!
 The rest 's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,
 Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.
Val. [rising.] Rise? Truth, as ever, Lady, comes from you!
 I should rise—I who spoke for Cleves, can speak
 For Man—yet tremble now, who stood firm then!
 I laughed—for 'twas past tears—that Cleves should starve
 With all hearts beating loud the infamy,
 And no tongue daring trust as much to air!
 Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?
 Oh Lady, for your own sake look on me!
 On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain,
 Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts!
 I was proud once—I saw you—and they sank,
 So that each magnified a thousand times
 Were nothing to you—but such nothingness.
 Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,
 A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?
 What is my own desert? But should your love
 Have . . . there's no language helps here . . . singled me,—
 Then—Oh, that wild word 'then!'—be just to love,
 In generosity its attribute!
 Love, since you pleased to love! All's cleared—a stage
 For trial of the question kept so long;
 Judge you—Is Love or Vanity the best?

You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first
 What all will shout one day—you, vindicate
 Our earth and be its angel! All is said.
 Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours,
 But for the cause' sake, look on me and him
 And speak!
The D. I have received the Prince's message:
 Say, I prepare my answer!
Val. Take me, Cleves!
[He withdraws.]
The D. Mournful—that nothing's what it calls itself!
 Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!
 And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?
 I did ill to mistrust the world so soon—
 Already was this Berthold at my side.
 The valley-level has its hawks, no doubt:
 May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
 Yet Valence . . . let me see his rival then!

ACT V

Night.—SCENE. The Hall.

Enter BERTHOLD and MELCHIOR.

Mel. And here you wait the matter's issue?

Berth. Here.

Mel. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then.

But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how

Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?

Berth. Oh,

Turned out no better than the foreheadless—

Was dazzled not so very soon, that's all!

For my part, this is scarce the hasty, showy,

Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.

Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 'tis gone.

—Let her commence the unfriended
innocent,
And carry wrongs about from court to
court ?

No, truly ! The least shake of fortune's
sand,

—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing-
fit,

King Philip takes a fancy to blue eyes,—
And wondrously her claims would
brighten up !

Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient
law,

O'er-looked provisoes, past o'er pre-
mises,

Follow in plenty. No: 'tis the safer step.
The hour beneath the convent-wall is
lost :

Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.

Mel. Which is to say, you, losing
heart already,

Elude the adventure !

Berth. Not so—or, if so—
Why not confess at once, that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just
now

To lay, one moment, down their
privilege

With the notion they can any time at
pleasure

Retake it ? that may turn out hazard-
ous !

We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque :
those favoured few

Who keep the chamber's top, and
honour's chance

Of the early evening, may retain their
place

And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late ; and I observe

A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the
doorway

Not only bar new-comers entering now.
But caution those who left, for any
cause,

And would return, that morning draws
too near ;

The ball must die off, shut itself up.
We—

I think, may dance lights out and sun-
shine in,

And sleep off headache on our frippery :

But friend the other, who cunningly
stole out,

And, after breathing the fresh air out-
side,

Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.

I stick to privilege, on second thoughts !

Mel. Yes—you evade the adventure !

—And, beside,
Give yourself out for colder than you
are.

—King Philip, only, notes the lady's
eyes ?

Don't they come in for somewhat of the
motive

With you too ?

Berth. Yes—no: I am past that
now !

Gone 'tis: I cannot shut my eyes to
fact.

Of course, I might by forethought and
contrivance

Reason myself into a rapture. Gone !
And something better come instead, no
doubt.

Mel. So be it ! Yet, all the same,
proceed my way,

Though to your end ; so shall you
prosper best.

The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish . . .
call it,

Romantic way.

Berth. Won easier ?

Mel. Will not she ?

Berth. There I profess humility with-
out bound !

I'll cannot speed—not I—the Emperor !

Mel. And I should think the Emperor
best waived.

From your description of her mood and
way !

You could look, if it pleased you, into
hearts ;

But are too indolent and fond of
watching

Your own—you know that, for you
study it.

Berth. Had you but seen the orator
her friend,

So bold and voluble an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the
change !

Make her an Empress ? Ah, that changed the case !

Oh, I read hearts ! And for my own behoof,

I court her with my true worth : see the event !

I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay !

Before my uncle could obtain the ear
Of his superior, help me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant Duke
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.

I am past illusion on that score.

Mel. Here comes
The lady—

Berth. —And there you go ! But do not ! Give me

Another chance to please you. Hear me plead !

Mel. You'll keep, then, to the lover,
to the man ?

Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and SABYNE, and, after an interval, by the Courtiers.

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting !

The D. May it prove !
—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day ?

Berth. (Ay—that's the point !) I may be Emperor.

The D. 'Tis not for my sake only, I am proud

Of this you offer : I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly spring

The highest, since most generous, of deeds.

Berth. (Generous—still that !) You underrate yourself.

You are, what I, to be complete, must have—

Find now, and may not find, another time.

While I career on all the world for stage,

There needs at home my representative.

The D. —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman be—

One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—

One like yourself !

Berth. Lady, I am myself,
And have all these : I want what's not myself,

Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords ?

Here's one already : be a friend's next gift

A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword !

The D. You love me, then ?

Berth. Your lineage I revere,
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,

Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty.

The D. But, for love—

Berth. A further love I do not understand.

Our best course is to say these hideous truths,

And see them, once said, grow endurable :

Like waters shuddering from their central bed,

Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,

That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,

A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues

In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and, at last,

Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—

Accepted by all things they came to scare.

The D. You cannot love, then ?

Berth. —Charlemagne, perhaps !
Are you not over-curious in love-lore ?

The D. I have become so, very recently.

It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,

Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—

Asking the terms of my becoming yours ?

Berth. Let me not do myself injustice, neither !

Because I will not condescend to fictions

That promise what my soul can ne'er
acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded
phrase
May not include far more of what you
seek,
Than wide professions of less scrupulous
men.

You will be Empress, once for all :
with me

The Pope disputes supremacy—you
stand

And none gainsays, the earth's first
woman !

The D. That—

Or simple Lady of Ravestein again ?

Berth. The matter's not in my
arbitrement !

Now I have made my claims—which I
regret—

Cede one, cede all !

The D. This claim then, you
enforce ?

Berth. The world looks on.

The D. And when must I decide ?

Berth. When, Lady ? Have I said
thus much so promptly

For nothing ? Poured out, with such
pains, at once

What I might else have suffered to ooze
forth

Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long,
For aught less than as prompt an
answer, too ?

All's fairly told now : who can teach
you more ?

The D. I do not see him.

Berth. I shall ne'er deceive.

This offer should be made befittingly
Would time allow the better setting
forth

The good of it, with what is not so
good,

Advantage, and disparagement as well—
But as it is, the sum of both must
serve.

I am already weary of this place—

My thoughts are next stage on to
Rome. Decide !

The Empire—or,—not even Juliers
now !

Hail to the Empress—farewell to the
Duchess !

[*The Courtiers, who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*

Courtiers. —' Farewell,' Prince ? when
we break in at our risk—

Clug. Almost upon court-licence
trespassing—

Courtiers. —To point out how your
claims are valid yet !

You know not, by the Duke her father's
will,

The lady, if she weds beneath her
rank,

Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's
favour—

So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed

A subject, then yourself, next heir, by
right

Succeed to Juliers.

Berth. What insanity ?—

Gui. Sir, there's one Valence—the
pale fiery man

You saw and heard, this morning—
thought, no doubt,

Was of considerable standing here :
I put it to your penetration, Prince,

If aught save love, the truest love for
her,

Could make him serve the lady as he
did !

He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a
place

With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the lady's
face—

So runs the story : is that credible ?
For, first—no sooner in, than he's
apprised

Fortunes have changed ; you are all-
powerful here,

The lady as powerless : he stands fast
by her !

The D. [*Aside.*] And do such deeds
spring up from love alone ?

Gui. But here occurs the question,
does the lady

Love him again ? I say, How else can
she ?

Can she forget how he stood singly
forth

In her defence, dared outrage all of us,

Insult yourself—for what, save love's reward ?

The D. [*Aside.*] And is love then the sole reward of love ?

Gui. But, love him as she may and must—you ask,

Means she to wed him ? 'Yes,' both natures answer !

Both, in their pride, point out the sole result—

Nought less would he accept nor she propose !

For each conjuncture was she great enough

—Will be, for this !

Clug. Though, now that this is known,

Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .

The D. —What, sir, and wherefore ?—since I am not sure

That all is any other than you say ?

You take this Valence, hold him close to me,

Him with his actions : can I choose but look ?

I am not sure, love trulier shows itself

Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,

Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.

Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,

Ere I had dared,)—now that the look is dared—

Sure that I do not love him !

Gui. Hear you, Prince ?

Berth. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean

—Unless to prove with what alacrity You give your lady's secrets to the world ?

—How much indebted, for discovering That quality, you make me, will be found

When next a keeper for my own's to seek !

Courtiers. 'Our Lady ?'

Berth. —She assuredly remains !

The D. Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous ?

You could renounce your power, if this were so,

And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love

Yet keep my Duchy ? You perhaps exceed

Him, even, in disinterestedness !

Berth. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose ?

Your will and choice are still as ever, free !

Say, you have known a worthier than myself

In mind and heart, of happier form and face—

Others must have their birthright : I have gifts,

To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.

Against a hundred other qualities, I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing—

Weld you the Empire ?

The D. And my heart away ?

Berth. When have I made pretension to your heart ?

I give none. I shall keep your honour safe ;

With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts

You marble woman with the marble rose.

Loose on her hand, she never will let fall.

In graceful, slight, silent security.

You will be proud of my world-wide career,

And I content in you the fair and good. What were the use of planting a few

seeds, The thankless climate never would mature—

Affections all repelled by circumstance ? Enough : to these no credit I attach,—

To what you own, find nothing to object.

Write simply on my requisition's face What shall content my friends—that you admit,

As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,

Or never need admit them, as my wife—

And either way, all's ended.

The D. Let all end !

Berth. The requisition !

Courtiers. —Valence holds,
of course!
Berth. Desire his presence!
[*ADOLF goes out.*
Courtiers. [to each other.] Out it all
comes yet!
He'll have his word against the bargain
still!
He's not the man to tamely acquiesce!
One passionate appeal — upbraiding
even,
Might turn the tide again! Despair
not yet!

[*They retire a little.*
Berth. [to MELCHIOR.] The Empire
has its old success, my friend!
Mel. You've had your way: before
the spokesman comes,
Let me, but this once, work a problem
out,
And ever more be dumb. The Empire
wins?
To better purpose I have read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

Mel. [to the Courtiers.] Apart, my
masters!
[To VALENCE.] Sir, one word with you!
I am a poor dependent of the Prince's—
Pitched on to speak, as of slight con-
sequence;
You are no higher, I find: in other
words,
We two, as probably the wisest here,
Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.
Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact
Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for
them?
Do you reply so, and what trouble
saved!
The Prince, then—an embroiled strange
heap of news
This moment reaches him—if true or
false,
All dignity forbids he should inquire
In person, or by worthier deputy;
Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander
come:
And so, 'tis I am pitched on. You have
heard
His offer to your lady?

Val. Yes.

Mel.

—Conceive

Her joy thereat?

Val. I cannot.

Mel.

No one can:
All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Val. [*Aside.*]

So!

No after-judgment—no first thought
revised—

Her first and last decision!—me, she
leaves—

Takes him—a simple heart is flung
aside,

The ermine o'er a heartless breast
embraced!

Oh heaven, this mockery has been
played too oft!

Once, to surprise the angels—twice,
that fiends

Recording, might be proud they chose
not so—

Thrice, many thousand times, to teach
the world

All men should pause, misdoubt their
strength, since men

Could have such chance yet fail so
signally,

—But ever—ever—this farewell to
Heaven,

Welcome to earth—this taking death
for life—

This spurning love and kneeling to the
world—

Oh heaven, it is too often and too old!

Mel. Well, on this point—what but
an absurd rumour

Arises—these, its source—its subject,
you!

Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
They say, your service claims the lady's
hand!

Of course, nor Prince nor Lady can
respond:

Yet something must be said—for, were
it true

You made such claim, the Prince
would...

Val. Well, sir,—would?

Mel. —Not only probably withdraw
his suit,

But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own.—Oh, there are reasons
why!

But you'll excuse at present all save
this,—

I think so. What we want is, your own witness,

For, or against—her good, or yours : decide !

Val. [*Aside.*] Be it her good if she accounts it so !

[*After a contest.*] For what am I but hers, to choose as she ?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from her

May reach, and dwell with, what she looks upon ?

Mel. [*to the Prince.*] Now to him, you !

Berth. [*to VALENCE.*] My friend acquaints you, sir,

The noise runs . . .

Val. —Prince, how fortunate are you,

Wedding her as you will, in spite of it, To show belief in love ! Let her but love you,

All else you disregard ! What else can be ?

You know how love is incompatible With falsehood—purifies, assimilates All other passions to itself.

Mel. Ay, sir :

But softly ! Where, in the object we select,

Such love is, perchance, wanting ?

Val. Then, indeed,

What is it you can take ?

Mel. Nay—ask the world !

Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,

An influence o'er mankind.

Val. When man perceives . . .

—Ah, I can only speak as for myself !

The D. Speak for yourself.

Val. May I ?—no, I have spoken, And time's gone by !—Had I seen such an one,

As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—

Sould my task be to evolve her love : If for myself !—if for another—well.

Berth. Heroic truly ! And your sole reward,—

The secret pride in yielding up your own ?

Val. Who thought upon reward ?

And yet how much

Comes after—Oh what ample recompense !

Is the knowledge of her, nought ? the memory, nought ?

—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,

Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world,

And say, love can go unrequited here ! You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—

Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,

All goodness cherished where you dwell—and dwell.

What would he have ? He holds you— you, both form,

And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room

For love of you, he would not serve you now

The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies, Win you new realms, or best, in saving you

Die blissfully—that's past so long ago !

He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—

Your good, by any means, himself unseen,

Away, forgotten !—He gives that life's task up,

As it were . . . but this charge which I return—

[*Offers the requisition, which she takes.*

Wishing your good !

The D. [*having subscribed it.*] And opportunely, sir—

Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,

Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate. Most on a wedding day, as mine is too,

Should gifts be thought of : yours comes first by right.

Ask of me !

Berth. He shall have whate'er he asks,

For your sake and his own !

Val. [*Aside.*] If I should ask—

The withered bunch of flowers she wears—perhaps,

One last touch of her hand, I never more

Shall see !

[After a pause, presenting his paper to the Prince.]

Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!

Berth. I will, sir.

The D. *[as VALENCE prepares to retire.]*—Nay, do out your duty, first!

You bore this paper; I have registered My answer to it: read it and have done!

[VALENCE reads it.]

—I take him—give up Juliers and the world!

This is my Birthday.

Mel. Berthold, my one hero Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books, Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—

Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!

Berth. *[after a pause.]* Lady, well rewarded! Sir, as well deserved! I could not imitate—I hardly envy—I do admire you! All is for the best!

Too costly a flower were you, I see it now,

To pluck and set upon my barren helm To wither—any garish plume will do! I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—

You can so well afford to yield it me, And I were left, without it, sadly off! As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,

A somewhat wearier life seems to remain

Than I thought possible where... 'faith, their life

Begins already—they're too occupied To listen—and few words content me best!

[Abruptly to the Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though! Who obey me here?

The D. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—

Gui. *[starting from the Courtiers.]*—And I?

Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you? Shall not I get some little duties up At Ravestein and emulate the rest?

God save you, Gaucelme! 'Tis my Birthday, too!

Berth. You happy handful that remain with me

. . . That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite

I shall leave over you—will earn your wages,

Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade! Meantime,—go copy me the precedents Of every installation, proper styles, And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—

While I prepare to go on my old way, And somewhat wearily, I must confess!

The D. *[with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them.]* Come, Valence, to our friends—God's earth . . .

Val. *[as she falls into his arms.]*—And thee!

LURIA

A TRAGEDY

I DEDICATE

THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY

To a Great Dramatic Poet ;

' WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT : '

—IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED, BY NOT THE LEAST
WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

TO SHAKESPEARE,

MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN
A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

London, 1846.

PERSONS

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the
Florentine Forces.
HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.
PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander,
now LURIA's Chief Officer.

BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic
of Florence.
JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.
TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.
DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

TIME, 14—.

SCENE.—LURIA's *Camp between Florence and Pisa.*

ACT I

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary ;*
PUCCIO *standing by.*

Brac. [*to Puc.*] Then, you join battle
in an hour ?

Puc.

Not I ;

Luria, the Captain.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] ' In an hour, the
battle.'

[*To Puc.*] Sir, let your eye run o'er this
loose digest,
And see if very much of your report
Have slipped away through my civilian
phrase.

Does this instruct the Signory aright
How army stands with army ?

Puc. [*taking the paper.*] All seems
here :

—That Luria, seizing with our city's
force

The several points of vantage, hill and
plain,

Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.

Brac.

So sure ?

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too !

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in
his hand.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] ' The Signory hold
Pisa in their hand.'

Your own proved soldiery's our
warrant, sir :

So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open
roads,

To post with it to Florence !

Puc. [*returning the paper.*] All seems here ;

Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report !

Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call
To save her, as he only could, no doubt ;
Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—

Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you :
Each day's note you, her Commissary,
make

Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
No youngster am I longer, to my cost :
Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice

And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria,
still,

As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct,
faith,

Had never met in any man before,
I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
But now, this last report and I have done—

So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,

'Twere not amiss if some one old i' the trade

Subscribed with, ' True, for once rash counsel's best.

This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,

This boy to whose untried sagacity,
Raw valour, Florence trusts without reserve

The charge to save her,—justifies her choice ;

In no point has this stranger failed his friends :

Now praise !' I say this, and it is not here.

Brac. [*to the Sec.*] Write, ' Puccio, superseded in the charge,

By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,

And no reward our Signory can give
Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully.'

Aught more ? Five minutes hence,
both messengers !

Puccio goes.
Brac. [*after a pause, and while he slowly tears the paper into shreds.*]

I think . . . (pray God, I hold in fit contempt

This warfare's noble art and ordering,
And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,

Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife
as good,—

Spit properly at what men term their skill !—)

Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.

With Pisa's strength diminished thus
and thus,

Such points of vantage in our hands and such,

Lucca still off the stage, too,—all's assured :

Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,

That Luria's trial end and sentence pass !

Sec. Patron,—

Brac. Ay, Lapo ?

Sec. If you trip, I fall ;

'Tis in self-interest I speak—

Brac. Nay, nay,

You overshoot the mark, my Lapo !
Nay !

When did I say pure love's impossible ?

I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,

Load your young brow with what concerns it least,

And, when we visit Florence, let you pace

The Piazza by my side as if we talked,
Where all your old acquaintances may see :

You'd die for me, I should not be surprised !

Now then !

Sec. Sir, look about and love yourself !

Step after step, the Signory and you
Tread gay till this tremendous point's to pass ;

Which, pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,—

Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,

Or too delicious may not prove the pride

Of this long secret Trial you dared plan,
Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
Who think themselves your lords, they are such slaves ?

If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,

Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,
From that adoring army at his back,
'Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,

Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Brac. Then—

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,

We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past ?

Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit

At watch and ward ? Where's danger on your part,

With that thin flitting instantaneous steel,

'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-force world ?

If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after all ?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that ?

Sec. Here I sit, your scribe,
And in and out goes Luria, days and nights ;

This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other friend,

Husain ; they talk—all that's feigned easily ;

He speaks (I would not listen if I could)
Reads, orders, counsels :—but he rests sometimes,—

I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour

On the lynx-skins, yonder ; hold his bared black arms

Into the sun from the tent-opening ; laugh

When his horse drops the forage from his teeth

And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.

That man believes in Florence, as the saint

Tied to the wheel believes in God !

Brac. How strange—

You too have thought that !

Sec. Do but you think too,
And all is saved ! I only have to write,
'The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last ;

Bury it' . . . so I write to the Signory . . .

'Bury this Trial in your breasts for ever,
Blot it from things or done or dreamed about :

So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
With no suspicion what reverse was near,—

As if no meteoric finger hushed

The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip,

Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight.'

Brac. [looks to the wall of the tent.]
Did he draw that ?

Sec. With charcoal, when the watch
Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia

Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;

That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,
—a sketch,—

And again where the cloak hangs,
yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec. She is sent the spy
Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :

Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
Is surely safe. What shall I write ?

Brac. I see—

A Moorish front, nor of such ill design !
Lapo, there's one thing plain and positive ;

Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.

What ? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,

And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,

Yet render up the charge when peace returned,

Have ever proved too much for Florentines,

Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—

If in the struggle when the soldier's sword

Should sink its point before the statist's pen,

And the calm head replace the violent hand,

Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition with unvarying fate,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
Be forced to own such falls the natural end,

And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
Declare, 'The Foreigner, one not my child,

Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height

The glory, then descend into the shame ;
So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
And punishment the easier task for me :

—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from any ties that bind the rest

Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,

No Past with us, no Future,—such a spirit

Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,

Stand firm where every famed precursor fell ?

My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs

So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.

The charges here, they may be true or false,

—What is set down ? Errors and oversights,

A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,

Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,

Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now ;

Even that he loves this lady who believes

She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted

By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—

She who remembering her whole House's fall,

That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,

Now labours to make Luria . . . poor device

As plain . . . the instrument of her revenge !

—That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,

Exorbitant belief in its reward,
And after, when sure disappointment

follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—

Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,

Weigh with me less than least ; as nothing weigh !

Upon that broad Man's-heart of his, I go !

On what I know must be, yet while I live

Shall never be, because I live and know !

Brute-force shall not rule Florence ! Intellect

May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies,—

But Intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And Intellect's tradition so kept up

Till the good comes—'twas Intellect that ruled,

Not Brute-force bringing from the battle-field

The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces

We lent it there to lure its grossness on ;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe

To show against us in our market-place,
Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear

(Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,

When all was done they frightened nobody)

Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
With our own warrant and allowance.
No!

The whole procedure's overcharged,—
its end

In too strict keeping with the bad first
step.

To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
Well then, to perish for a single fault,
Let that be simple justice!—There, my
Lapo!

A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's
body—

Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence
come!

[LURIA, *who, with DOMIZIA, has
entered unobserved at the close of
the last phrase, now advancing.*

And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?

Brac. Ah, you so close, sir? Lady
Domizia too?

I said it needs must be a busy moment
For one like you—that you were now
i' the thick

Of your duties, doubtless, while we
idlers sat...

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in
that paper

What you were saying!

Brac. Oh—my day's dispatch!
I censure you to Florence: will you
see?

Lur. See your dispatch, your last,
for the first time?

Well, if I should, now? For in truth,
Domizia,

He would be forced to set about
another,

In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
To mention that important circum-
stance;

So, while he wrote I should gain time,
such time!

Do not send this!

Brac. • And wherefore?

Lur. These Lucchese
Are not arrived—they never will
arrive!

And I must fight to-day, arrived or
not;

And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure:
And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time

To look upon my battle from the hills.
Like a late moon, of use to nobody!

And I must break my battle up, send
forth,

Surround on this side, hold in check on
that—

Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instruc-
tions home,

—Incompleteness, incompleteness!

Brac. Ah, we scribes!

Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
As a most happy fortune; both at once
Were formidable—singly faced, each
falls.

Lur. So, no great battle for my
Florentines!

No crowning deed, decisive and com-
plete,

For all of them, the simple as the wise,
Old, young, alike, that do not under-
stand

Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
By which we prove retreat may be
success,

Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times.
—whole gain:

They want results—as if it were their
fault!

And you, with warmest wish to be my
friend,

Will not be able now to simply say
'Your servant has performed his task
—enough!

You ordered, he has executed: good!
Now walk the streets in holiday attire,

Congratulate your friends, till noon
strikes fierce,

Then form bright groups beneath the
Duomo's shade!

No! you will have to argue and ex-
plain,

Persuade them, all is not so ill in the
end,

Tease, tire them out! Arrive, arrive,
Lucchese!

Dom. Well, you will triumph for the
Past enough,

Whatever be the Present's chance; no
service

Falls to the ground with Florence: she
awaits

Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah, Braccio, you know Florence! will she, think you, Receive one . . . what means 'fittingly receive'?

—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none:

And yet Domizia promises so much!

Brac. Kind women still give men a woman's prize.

I know not o'er which gate most boughs will arch,

Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue:

I should have judged, the fullest of rewards

Our State gave Luria, when she made him chief

Of her whole force, in her best captain's place.

Lur. That, my reward? Florence on my account

Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!

And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy—

Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,

While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee!

That was my calling—there was my true place!

I should have felt, in some one over me, Florence impersonate, my visible Head,

As I am over Puccio,—taking life Directly from her eye! They give me you:

But do you cross me, set me half to work?

I enjoy nothing—but I will, for once! Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?

Brac. Let us compound the matter; wait till noon:

Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast! I wonder, do you guess why I delay

Involuntarily the final blow As long as possible? Peace follows it!

Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads

Come out again, the penetrating eyes; As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art

You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.

'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front

The interrupted scaffold climbs anew; The walls are peopled by the painter's brush;

The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.

The Present's noise and trouble have retired

And left the eternal Past to rule once more;—

You speak its speech and read its records plain,

Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your friend:

—But Luria—where will then be Luria's place?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that Past's own sake,

Of which his actions, sealing up the sum By saving all that went before from wreck,

Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets

Leading the life my rough life helps no more,

So different, so new, so beautiful—Nor fear that you will tire to see parade

The club that slew the lion, now that crooks

And shepherd-pipes come into use again?

For very lone and silent seems my East In its drear vastness: still it spreads,

and still

No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—Not ever more!—Well, well, to-day is ours!

Dom. [to BRAC.] Should he not have been one of us?

Lur. Oh, no!

Not one of you, and so escape the thrill

Of coming into you, of changing thus,—Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts

The boundless unrest of the savage heart!

The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land,

Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength ;

Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile :
Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,

In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies !

Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever !

Your placid heads still find rough hands new work ;

Some minutes' chance—there comes the need of mine—

And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio !

You hold my strength ; 'twere best dispose of it !

What you created, see that you find food for—

I shall be dangerous else !

Brac. How dangerous, Sir ?

Lur. Oh, there are many ways,
Domizia warns me,

And one with half the power that I possess,

Grows very formidable ! Do you doubt ?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk,
Morn wears ; we keep you from your proper place

In the field.

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more :

My part is done, and Puccio's may begin.

I cannot trench upon his province longer

[^]With any face.—You think yourselves so safe ?

Why see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—

One could . . .

Dom. A trumpet !

Lur. My Luccese at last !

Arrived, as sure as Florence stands !
your leave !

[*Springs out.*

Dom. How plainly is true greatness characterized

By such unconsciousness as Luria's here,

Strength sharing least the secret of itself !

Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,

Such save the world which none but they could save,

Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.

Brac. Yes : and how worthy note, that these same great ones

In hand or head, with such unconsciousness

And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,

From taking up whatever offices
Involve the whole world's safety or mishap,

Into their mild hands as a thing of course !
The statist finds it natural to lead
The mob who might as easily lead him—

The soldier marshals troops who know as much—

Statist and soldier verily believe !
While we poor scribes . . . you catch me

thinking, now,

That I shall in this very letter write
What none of you are able ! To it, Lapo !

[*DOMIZIA goes.*
This last, worst, all-affected childish fit
Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,

Convinces me ; the Past was no child's play :

It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
All's mere dissimulation—to remove

The fear, he best knows we should entertain.

The utmost danger was at hand. Is 't written ?

Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,

And speak your fullest on the other side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,

And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,

As the Mage Negro turns to Christ the Babe.—

I judge his childishness the mere relapse
To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
And presently will work, so, meantime, plays :
Whence more than ever I believe in him.

Brac. [after a pause.] The sword !
At best, the soldier, as he says,
In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men !—To Florence with each letter !

ACT II

NOON.

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart
Thro' all its safeguards ? Hate is said to help—
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm ;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead :—yet do I trust it not.
Nor Man's devices, nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on Earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—Hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee.
Turn aside
A single step, for gratitude, or shame,—
Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage
That I prepare to launch against thee now,—
With other payment than thy noblest found,—
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor

From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth :

Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,

Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last

The strange blow came for the expected wreath ;

And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As if some natural law had changed,—
how else

Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,

Judge Porzio's actions worthy such an end ?

But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,

—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,

In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood

To show its colour whether false or no !
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time,
then speak,

—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,

Cry, Florence was all falseness, so, false here,—

And show them what a simple task remained—

To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name

The city wedded to its wickedness.

None stood by them as I by Luria stand !

So, when the stranger cheated of his due
Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids,
Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat

For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,

Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died !
He comes—his friend—black faces in the camp

Where moved those peerless brows and
eyes of old !

Enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it
as you hope ?

'Tis Lucca ?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet
merely !

Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Dom. Whom I withdraw before ; tho'
if I lingered

You could not wonder, for my time
fleets fast.

The overtaking night brings such
reward !

—And where will then be room for me ?
Yet still

Remember who was first to promise it,
And envied those who also can per-
form !

[Goes.]
Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans?—

Hus. In the camp ;
A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and
good ;

A man I seem as I had seen before :
Most like, it was some statue had the
face.

Lur. Admit him ! This will prove
the last delay.

Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou
going on !

Thou hearest what the grave woman
said but now :

To-night rewards thee. That is well to
hear ;

But stop not therefore : hear it, and go
on !

Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph
and the rest

They round me in the ears with, all day
long ?

All that, I never take for earnest,
friend !

Well would it suit us,—their triumphal
arch

Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the
Moors !

But gratitude in those Italian eyes—

That, we shall get ?

Hus. It is too cold an air.

Our sun rose out of yonder mound of
mist :

Where is he now ? So, I trust none of
them !

Lur. Truly ?

Hus. I doubt and fear. There
stands a wall

'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating
men !

They use thee !

Lur. And I feel it, Husain ; ycs,
And care not—yes, an alien force like
mine

Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature ; where its sole
use seems

To fight with and keep off an adverse
force

As alien,—which repelled, mine too
withdraws :

Inside, they know not what to do with
me ;

Thus I have told them laughingly and
oft,

But long since was prepared to learn
the worst.

Hus. What is the worst ?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain,
And speak my destiny, they dare not
speak—

Banish myself before they find the heart.
I will be first to say, 'The work re-
wards !

I know, for all your praise, my use is
over,

So may it prove !—meanwhile 'tis best
I go,

And carry safe my memories of you all
To other scenes of action, newer
lands.'—

Thus leaving them confirmed in their
belief

They would not easily have tired of me.
You think this hard to say ?

Hus. Say it or not,

So thou but go, so they but let thee go !
This hating people, that hate each the
other,

And in one blandness to us Moors
unite—

Locked each to each like slippery
snakes, I say,

Which still in all their tangles, hissing
tongue
And threatening tail, ne'er do each
other harm ;
While any creature of a better blood,
They seem to fight for, while they circle
safe
And never touch it,—pines without a
wound,
Withers away beside their eyes and
breath.

See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn
his foe,
As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
Who hates him most !—But thou, the
friend of all,

... Come out of them !

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now !

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy,
no friend ! [*Goes.*]

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new
culture mars

Their perfect use in him ; just so the
brutes

Rest not, are anxious without visible
cause,

When change is in the elements at work,
Which man's trained senses fail to
apprehend.

But here,—he takes the distant chariot-
wheels

For thunder, festal fire for lightning's
flash,

The finer traits of cultivated life
For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message ! I but
wait your message
To sound the charge. You bring not
overtures

For truce ?—I would not, for your
General's sake,

You spoke of truce—a time to fight is
come,

And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he
keeps

His honest soldier's name to beat me
with,

Or leaves me all himself to beat, I
trust !

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You ? 'Tis—yes . . .

Tiburzio !

You were the last to keep the ford i' the
valley

From Puccio, when I threw in succours
there !

Why, I was on the heights—through the
defile

Ten minutes after, when the prey was
lost !

You wore an open skull-cap with a
twist

Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn
away ;

While I drove down my battle from the
heights, —

—I saw with my own eyes !

Tib. And you are Luria

Who sent my cohort, that laid down its
arms

In error of the battle-signal's sense,
Back safely to me at the critical time—

One of a hundred deeds—I know you !
Therefore

To none but you could I . . .

Lur. No truce, Tiburzio !

Tib. Luria, you know the peril
imminent

On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts

The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.

Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 'tis too late.
You have so plainly here the best of it,

That you must feel, brave soldier as you
are,

How dangerous we grow in this ex-
treme,

How truly formidable by despair.

Still, probabilities should have their
weight—

The extremest chance is ours, but, that
chance failing,

You win this battle. Wherefore say
I this ?

To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from you.

Were you, who threaten thus, a Floren-
tine . . .

Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than
her sons.

I can, and have perhaps obliged the
State,

Nor paid a mere son's duty.

Tib. Even so !
Were you the son of Florence, yet
endued

With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.

Lur. Me, detach ?

Tib. Time urges: you will ruin
presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence'
sake

You think you know. I have from
time to time

Made prize of certain secret missives
sent

From Braccio here, the Commissary,
home—

And knowing Florence otherwise, I
piece

The entire chain out, from these its
scattered links.

Your trial occupies the Signory ;
They sit in judgment on your conduct
now.

When men at home inquire into the
acts

Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .

Brief, they are Florentines ! You,
saving them,

Will seek the sure destruction saviours
find.

Lur. Tiburzio—

Tib. All the wonder is of course.
I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe.
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I com-
mand.

The duplicate is on its road ; but
this,—

Read it, and then I shall have more to
say.

Lur. Florence !

Tib. Now, were yourself a
Florentine,

This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall
away.

The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service

Her own affair ; reward—there's no
reward !

But you are bound by quite another tie ;
Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at
first

A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence'
side

Rather than Pisa's ; 'tis as fair a city
You war against, as that you fight for—
famed

As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts .
Nor to a stranger's eye would either
cause,

Stripped of the cumulative loves and
hates

Which take importance from familiar
view,

Stand as the right, and sole to be up-
held.

Therefore, should the preponderating
gift

Of love and trust, Florence was first to
throw,

Which made you hers not Pisa's, void
the scale,—

Old ties dissolving, things resume their
place

And all begins again. Break seal and
read !

At least let Pisa offer for you now !
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—

Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last fight and its opportunity ;

The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so

That shame should want its extreme
bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa
now

As I for Florence . . . say my chance
were yours !

You read this letter, and you find . . .
no, no !

Too mad !

Tib. I read the letter, find they
purpose

When I have crushed their foe, to crush
me : well ?

Lur. You, being their captain, what
is it you do ?

Tib. Why, as it is, all cities are alike—
Pisa will pay me much as Florence you ;
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
As you, or more : my weak head, they
will say,

Prompted this last expedient, my faint
heart

Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punish-
ment.

Another tenure of obedience, mine !

You are no son of Pisa's : break and
read !

Lur. And act on what I read ? What
act were fit ?

If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, which to me stands for
mankind,

—If that breaks up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it cannot
be !

You may be very sage, yet—all the
world

Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone !
What would the world be worth ?

Whose love be sure ?

The world remains—you are deceived !

Tib. Your hand !
I lead the vanguard.—If you fall,
beside,

The better—I am left to speak ! For
me,

This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
If I could help, it misses its effect ;
And after all you will look gallantly
Found dead here with that letter in
your breast.

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these
people once

And test them ere I answer finally !
At your arrival let the trumpet sound :
If mine returns not then the wonted cry,
It means that I believe—am Pisa's !

Tib. Well ! [*Goes.*

Lur. My heart will have it he speaks
true ! My blood

Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
If he had stept into my watch-tent,
night

And the wild desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and
given the salt

Secure, and, when my hour of watch
was done,

Taken my turn to sleep between his
knees,

Safe in the untroubled brow and honest
cheek.

Oh, world, where all things pass and
nought abides,

Oh, life the long mutation—is it so ?

Is it with life as with the body's change ?

—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good
must pass,

Nor manhood's strength can mate with
boyhood's grace,

Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find
strength,

But silently the first gift dies away,

And though the new stays, never both
at once !

Life's time of savage instinct o'er with
me,

It fades and dies away, past trusting
more,

As if to punish the ingratitude

With which I turned to grow in these
new lights,

And learned to look with European
eyes.

Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
Where Braccio's brow tells nothing,—
Puccio's mouth,

Domizia's eyes reject the searcher—yes !
For on their calm sagacity I lean,

Their sense of right, deliberate choice
of good,

Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal
with me.

Yes, that is better—that is best of all !
Such faith stays when mere wild belief
would go !

Yes—when the desert creature's heart,
at fault

Amid the scattering tempest's pillared
sands,

Betrays its steps into the pathless
drift—

The calm instructed eye of man holds
fast

By the sole bearing of the visible star,
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck
subsides,

The boundaries, lost now, shall be found
again,—

The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.

Yes: I trust Florence: Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon 's at an end: no Lucca? You must fight.

Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,

I am no Florentine?

Dom. It is yourself Who still are forcing us importunately, To bear in mind what else we should forget.

Lur. For loss!—For what I lose in being none!

No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,

But would remind you of the stranger's loss

In natural friends and advocates at home,

Hereditary loves, even rivalships, With precedents for honour and reward.

Still, there's a gain, too! If you take it so,

The stranger's lot has special gain as well!

Do you forget there was my own far East

I might have given away myself to, once, As now to Florence, and for such a gift, Stood there like a descended deity?

There, worship greets us! what do I get here? [*Shows the letter.*]

See! Chance has put into my hand the means

Of knowing what I earn, before I work! Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,

With your crown palpably before me? see!

Here lies my whole reward! Best know it now,

Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,

For swordsmen's-pay alone,—break seal and read!

In that case, you will find your full desert!

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends!

You need me now, and all the gratitude

This letter can contain will never balance

The after-feeling that your need's at end!

This moment . . . Oh, the East has use with you!

Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside

With the past praise, in a dark corner yet!

How say you? 'Tis not so with Florentines—

Captains of yours—for them, the ended war

Is but a first step to the peace begun —He who did well in war, just earns

the right To begin doing well in peace, you know!

And certain my precursors,—would not such

Look to themselves in such a chance as this,

Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?

For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,

Of strange occurrences, ingratitude, Treachery even,—say that one of you

Surmised this letter carried what might turn

To harm hereafter, cause him pre-judice—

What would he do?

Dom. [*hastily.*] Thank God and take revenge!

Turn her own force against the city straight,

And even at the moment when the foe Sounded defiance . . .

[*TIBURZIO'S trumpet sounds in the distance.*]

Lur. Ah, you Florentines! So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt!

My simple Moorish instinct bids me sink The obligation you relieve me from,

Still deeper! [*To PUCCIO.*] Sound our answer, I should say!

And thus:—[*tearing the paper.*]—The battle! That solves every doubt!

ACT III

AFTERNOON.

PUCCIO, *as making a report to* JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your Captain must report the rest;

For, as I say, the main engagement over,

And Luria's special part in it performed,

How could subalterns like myself expect Leisure or leave to occupy the field

And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting?

I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end

Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke, That Luria would detach me and prevent

The flying Pisans seeking what they found,

Friends in the rear, a point to rally by. But no—more honourable proved my post!

I had the august captive to escort Safe to our camp—some other could pursue,

Fight, and be famous; gentler chance was mine—

Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed!

He's in the tent there.

Jac. Is the substance down? I write—'The vanguard beaten, and both wings

In full retreat—Tiburzio prisoner'— And now,—'That they fell back and

formed again On Lucca's coming.'—Why then, after all,

'Tis half a victory, no conclusive one?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria's fault was—?

Puc. Oh, for fault . . . not much! He led the attack, a thought impetuously,

—There's commonly more prudence; now, he seemed

To hurry measures, otherwise well-judged;

By over-concentrating strength, at first,

Against the enemy's van, both sides escaped:

That's reparable—yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,

With the advantage of a fault beside— What is it, Puccio?—that by pressing

forward

With too impetuous . . .

Brac.

The report anon! Thanks, Sir—you have elsewhere a charge, I know.

[PUCCIO goes.]

There's nothing done but I would do again;

Yet, Lapo, it may be the Past proves nothing,

And Luria has kept faithful to the end.

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac.

Yes: so was not I. He could not choose but tear that letter—true!

Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks—

You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I. So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they

say!

Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Lur. [to *Puc.*] Say, at his pleasure I will see Tiburzio: All's at his pleasure.

Dom. [to *Lur.*] Were I not so sure You would reject, as you do constantly, Praise,—I might tell you what you have

deserved

Of Florence by this last and crowning feat:

But words are vain.

Lur.

Nay, you may praise

me now!

I want instruction every hour, I find, On points where once I saw least need

of it;

And praise, I have been used to do without,

Seems not so easy to dispense with now: After a battle half one's strength is gone—

And glorious passion in us once appeased,
Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.

All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
To me, the stranger: you, no doubt, may know

Why Pisa needs must give her rival place.
And I am growing nearer you, perhaps,
For I, too, want to know and be assured.
When a cause ceases to reward itself,
Its friend needs fresh sustainments;

praise is one,
And here stand you—you, Lady, praise me well.

But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise:

To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,

Your quick sense looks: you crown and call aright

The soul of the purpose, ere 'tis shaped as act,

Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.

But when the act comes, stands for what 'tis worth,

—Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he's my judge!

Was all well, Puccio?

Puc. All was . . . must be well:
If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .

—No, there's no doubt, we must—all was well done.

Lur. In truth? But you are of the trade, my Puccio!

You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.

There's none knows like a fellow of the craft,

The all-unestimated sum of pains

That go to a success the world can see:
They praise then, but the best they never know

—While you know!—Oh, if envy mix with it,

Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold!

—For nothing's like it; nothing else records

Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away

For ever—so, pure gold that praise must be!

And I have yours, my soldier! yet the best

Is still to come—there's one looks on apart

Whom all refers to, failure or success;
What's done might be our best, our utmost work,

And yet inadequate to serve his need.
Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our service—

Well done for us, is it well done for him?

His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength

Answers his end? Should he have chosen higher?

Do we help Florence, now our best is done?

Brac. This battle, with the foregone services,
Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well!
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all!

And yet . . . 'tis like . . . this instant while I speak

Is like the turning-moment of a dream
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me!

Well then, one always dreams of friends at home;

And always comes, I say, the turning-point

When something changes in the friendly eyes

That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight . . .

And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,

Or changed and enemies, for all their words,

And all is mockery and a maddening show.

You, now, so kind here, all you Florentines,

What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .

Nobody spoke it . . . yet I know it well!—

Come now—this battle saves you, all's at end,

Your use of me is o'er, for good, for evil,—

Come now, what's done against me, while I speak,

In Florence? Come! I feel it in my blood,

My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ear That spite of all this smiling and kind speech

You are betraying me! What is it you do?

Have it your way, and think my use is over—

That you are saved and may throw off the mask—

Have it my way, and think more work remains

Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not!

Or prudent be, or generous, as you choose,

But tell me—tell what I refused to know

At noon, lest heart should fail me! Well? That letter?

My fate is known at Florence! What is it?

Brac. Sir, I shall not conceal what you divine.

It is no novelty for innocence To be suspected, but a privilege:

The after certain compensation comes. Charges, I say not whether false or true,

Have been preferred against you some time since,

Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,

And which are therefore undergoing now

The due investigation. That is all. I doubt not but your innocence will

prove Apparent and illustrious, as to me,

To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Lur. My trial?

Dom. Florence, Florence to the end, My whole heart thanks thee!

Puc. [to *BRAC.*] What is 'Trial,' sir?

It was not for a trial—surely, no—I furnished you those notes from time to time?

I held myself aggrieved—I am a man—

And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,

And yet not mean at bottom of my heart

What should assist a—Trial, do you say?

You should have told me!

Dom. Nay, go on, go on! His sentence! Do they sentence him?

What is it? The block? Wheel?

Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,

Nor shall I give my own opinion here Of what it should be, or is like to be.

When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!

Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac. I assert, Maintain, and justify the absolute right

Of Florence to do all she can have done In this procedure,—standing on her

guard, Receiving even services like yours

With utmost fit suspicious wariness. In other matters, keep the mummery up!

Take all the experiences of the whole world,

Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,

Each reasoning which, to work out, cost a brain,

—In other cases, know these, warrant these,

And then dispense with them—'tis very well!

Let friend trust friend, and love demand its like,

And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—There's grace in that—and when the

fresh heart breaks, The new brain proves a martyr, what of them?

Where is the matter of one moth the more

Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?

But Florence is no simple John or James

To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit,
That he's the one excepted man by fate,
And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,

Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place

To Paul and George intent to try their chance!

Florence exists because these pass away;
She's a contrivance to supply a type
Of Man, which men's deficiencies refuse;

She binds so many, that she grows out of them—

Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they change

And pass away—there's always what upholds,

Always enough to fashion the great show.

As, see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
Of shapely cloud substantially the same!

A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
Are interfused, and live their life and die,—

Yet ever hangs the steady show i' the air
Under the sun's straight influence: that is well!

That is worth heaven to hold, and God to bless!

And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,

Which draws and holds suspended all of us,—

Binds transient mists and vapours into one,

Differing from each and better than they all.

And shall she dare to stake this permanence

On any one man's faith? Man's heart is weak,

And its temptations many: let her prove

Each servant to the very uttermost
Before she grant him her reward, I say!

Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,

Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,

Though they deserve it, did she only know!

—What should she do for these?

Brac. What does she not? Say, that she gives them but herself to serve!

Here's Luria—what had profited his strength,

When half an hour of sober fancying
Had shown him step by step the uselessness

Of strength exerted for its proper sake? But the truth is, she did create that strength,

Drew to the end the corresponding means.

The world is wide—are we the only men?

Oh, for the time, the social purpose's sake,

Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man, sole great and wise and good!

But shall we, therefore, standing by ourselves,

Insult our souls and God with the same speech?

There, swarm the ignoble thousands under Him—

What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?

Florence took up, turned all one way the soul

Of Luria with its fires, and here he stands!

She takes me out of all the world as him,

Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best?

Lur. Ah, brave me? And is this indeed the way

To gain your good word and sincere esteem?

Am I the baited tiger that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?

Obedience has no fruit then?—Be it so!
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The Captain of the conquering army,—mine—

With all your tokens, vraise and promise, ready

To show for what their names were
when you gave,
Not what you style them now you take
away?

If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And in their first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory, tell them how you menace
me—

Commending to their plain instinctive
sense,

My story first, your comment after-
ward,—

Will they take, think you, part with you
or me?

When I say simply, I, the man they
know,

Ending my work, ask payment, and find
Florence

Has all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving
words,

By what you call my sentence that's
to come—

Will they sit waiting it complacently?
When I resist that sentence at their
head,

What will you do, my mild antagonist?
Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud
and triumphant

That Florence knew you thoroughly
and by me,

And so was saved. 'See, Italy,' I'll
say,

'The need of our precautions! here's
a man

Was far advanced, just touched on the
reward

Less subtle cities had accorded him;
But we were wiser: at the end comes
this!'

And from that minute all your strength
will go.

The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, unenduring Luria,
Resenting her first slight probation
thus;

As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
He, only, walked the earth with privi-
lege

Against suspicion, free from causing
fear:

So, for the first inquisitive mother's-
word,

He turned, and stood on his defence,
forsooth!

Reward? You will not be worth
punishment!

Lur. And Florence knew me thus!
Thus I have lived,—

And thus you, with the clear fine
intellect,

Braccio, the cold acute instructed
mind,

Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused,
Reported me—how could you other-
wise!

Ay?—and what dropped from *you*,
just now, moreover?

Your information, Puccio?—did your
skill

And understanding sympathy approve
Such a report of me? Was this the
end?

Or is even this the end? Can I stop
here—

You, Lady, with the woman's stand
apart,

The heart to see with, not man's learned
eyes,

... I cannot fathom why you should
destroy

The unoffending one, you call your
friend—

So, looking at the good examples here
Of friendship, 'tis but natural I ask—

Had you a further end, in all you
spoke,

Than profit to me, in those instances
Of perfidy from Florence to her chiefs—

All I remember now for the first
time?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traver-
sari,

Sister of Porzio and of Berto both.
I have foreseen all that has come to
pass.

I knew the Florence that could doubt
their faith,

Must needs mistrust a stranger's—
holding back

Reward from them, must hold back his
reward.

And I believed, the shame they bore
and died,

He would not bear, but live and fight
against—

Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them ! All these against one foreigner !

And all this while, where is in the whole world

To his good faith a single witness ?

Tiburzio. [*who has entered during the preceding dialoguc.*] Here !

Thus I bear witness to it, not in word
But deed. I live for Pisa ; she's not lost

By many chances—much prevents from that !

Her army has been beaten, I am here.
But Lucca comes at last, one chance exists.

I rather would see Pisa three times lost
Than saved by any traitor, even by you ;

The example of a traitor's happy fortune
Would bring more evil in the end than good ;—

Pisa rejects such : save yourself and her !
I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
My charge,—the highest of her offices.

You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence

Her army, give her calumny that ground—

Nor bring it with you : be you all we gain !

And all she'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,

And save the crown's cost that should deck the head.

Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,

A proverb and a bye-word in all mouths !
Go you to Pisa ! Florence is my place—

Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
To Pisa !

Dom. Ah, my Braccio, are you caught ?

Brac. Puccio, good soldier and selected man,

Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
Ready, as fit, to serve in this event
Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—

Through me, she gives you the command and charge

She takes, through me, from him who hold it late !

A painful trial, very sore, was yours :
All that could draw out, marshal in array

The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—

Slights, scorn, neglects, were heaped on you to bear :

And ever you did bear and bow the head !

It had been sorry trial, to precede
Your feet, hold up the promise of reward

For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track
Through dark and doubt : take all the light at once !

Trial is over, consummation shines ;
Well have you served, as well henceforth command !

Puc. No, no . . . I dare not ! I am grateful, glad ;

But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged—

And he's my Captain—this is not the way

We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !

The sentence is not even passed, beside !

I dare not . . . where's the soldier could ?

Lur. Now, Florence—

Is it to be ?—You will know all the strength

Of the savage—to your neck the proof must go ?

You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see !

The savage plainly is impassible—
He keeps his calm way through insulting words,

Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which

Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense :

But if he steadily advances, still
Without a mark upon his callous hide,

Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,

And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,

—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,

The thick mid-forest, the real obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,

—He goes against it, like the brute he is!
It falls before him, or he dies in his course!

I kept my course through past ingratitude—

I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,

—Ay, let them glance from off me, very like,

Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
You grew so bold on, while you so despised

The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,

Was saving you. I bore and kept my course.

Now real wrong fronts me—see if I succumb!

Florence withstands me?—I will punish her!

At night my sentence will arrive, you say!

Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
—Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do:
After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks!

Go; you are free: join Lucca. I suspend

All further operations till to-night.

Thank you, and for the silence most of all!

[*To Brac.*] Let my complacent bland accuser go,

And carry his self-approving head and heart

Safe through the army which would trample him

Dead in a moment at my word or sign!

Go, sir, to Florence; tell friends what I say—

That while I wait their sentence, theirs waits them!

[*To Dom.*] You, Lady,—you have black Italian eyes!

I would be generous if I might . . . Oh, yes—

For I remember how so oft you seemed
Inclined at heart to break the barrier down

Which Florence finds God built between us both.

Alas, for generosity! this hour
Demands strict justice: bear it as you may!

I must—the Moor,—the Savage,—pardon you.

[*To Puc.*] Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth!

ACT IV

EVENING.

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria will do? Ah, 'tis yours, fair sir,

Your and your subtle-witted master's part,

To tell me that; I tell you what he can.
Jac. Friend, you mistake my station:

I observe
The game, watch how my betters play,
no more.

Puc. But mankind are not pieces—there's your fault!

You cannot push them, and, the first move made,

Lean back to study what the next should be,

In confidence that, when 'tis fixed upon,
You'll find just where you left them,
blacks and whites:

Men go on moving when your hand's away.

You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith

This whole time,—firmer than I choose to build,

Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
With Luria in his ordinary mind:

But now, oppression makes the wise man mad.

How do I know he will not turn and stand

And hold his own against you, as he may?
Suppose he but withdraws to Pisa—well,—

Then, even if all happens to your wish,
Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay—'twas an oversight,
Not waiting till the proper warrant
came :

You could not take what was not ours
to give.

But when at night the sentence really
comes,

And Florence authorizes past dispute
Luria's removal and your own advance,
You will perceive your duty and accept?

Puc. Accept what? muster-rolls of
soldiers' names?

An army upon paper?—I want men,
Their hearts as well as hands—and
where's a heart.

That's not with Luria, in the multitude
I come from walking through by Luria's
side?

You gave them Luria, set him on to grow,
Head-like, upon their trunk, one blood
feeds both,

They feel him there, and live, and well
know why!

—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and respected
theirs,

Managed their ease, yet never spared
his own.

All was your deed: another might have
served—

There's peradventure no such dearth
of men—

But you chose Luria—so, they grew to
him.

And now, for nothing they can under-
stand,

Luria's removed, off is to roll the head—
The body's mine—much I shall do
with it!

Jac. That's at the worst.

Puc. No—at the best, it is!
Best, do you hear? I saw them by his
side.

Only we two with Luria in the camp
Are left that know the secret? You
think that?

Hear what I saw: from rear to van, no
heart

But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks
an eye

But glancing told its fellow the whole
story

Of that convicted silent knot of spies
Who passed thro' them to Florence;
they might pass—

No breast but gladlier beat when free
of such!

Our troops will catch up Luria, close
him round,

Lead him to Florence as their natural
lord,

Partake his fortunes, live or die with
him.

Jac. And by mistake catch up along
with him

Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self-
despite

To still continue Second in Command!

Puc. No, Sir, no second nor so
fortunate!

Your tricks succeed with me too well
for that!

I am as you have made me, and shall
die

A mere trained fighting-back to serve
your end;

With words, you laugh at while they
leave your mouth,

For my life's rules and ordinance of
God!

I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
And earn my praise, and guard against
my blame,

As I was trained. I shall accept your
charge,

And fight against one better than my-
self,

Spite of my heart's conviction of his
worth—

That, you may count on!—just as
hitherto

I have gone on, persuaded I was
wronged,

Slighted, and moody, terms we learn
by rote,—

All because Luria superseded me—
Because the better nature, fresh-
inspired,

Mounted above me to its proper place!
What mattered all the kindly gracious-
ness,

And cordial brother's-bearing? This
was clear—

I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
And so must keep complaining like a
fool!

Go, take the curse of a lost man, I say!
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his real-
ness' sake

Thrust rudely in their place,—with such
regard

As might console them for their altered
rank.

Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
For Luria, and here's all your pet
deserves!

Of what account, then, are my services?
One word for all: whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he
turns

In self-defence and Florence goes to
ground,—

Or for a signal, everlasting shame,
He pardons you, simply seeks better
friends

And heads the Pisan and the Lucchese
troops

—And if I, for you ingrates past belief,
Resolve to fight against a man called
false,

Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights
there—

Whichever way he win, he wins for me,
For every soldier, for the true and good!
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this!

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou?—For they are
gone! The world lies bare
Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes
away!

Thou livest now, with men art man
again!

Those Florentines were eyes to thee of
old;

But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each:
There lie beneath thee thine own
multitudes.

Saw'st thou?

Lur. I saw.

Hus. Then, hold thy course,
my King!

The years return. Let thy heart have
its way!

Ah, they would play with thee as with
all else?

Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew.
Find out God's fault in thee as in the
rest?

Oh, watch but, listen only to these men
Once at their occupation! Ere ye know,
The free great heaven is shut, their
stifling pall

Drops till it frets the very tingling hair,
So weighs it on our head,—and, for the
earth,

Our common earth is tethered up and
down,

Over and across—'here shalt thou
move,' they say!

Lur. Ay, Husain?

Hus. So have they spoiled
all beside!

So stands a man girt round with
Florentines,

Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women,
boys and spies,

All in one tale, each singing the same
song,

How thou must house, and live at bed
and board,

Take pledge and give it, go their every
way,

Breathe to their measure, make thy
blood beat time

With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou
art lost—

A savage . . . how shouldst thou per-
ceive as they?

Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close
naked hand!

Look up to it! Why, down they pull
thy neck,

Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and
wouldst kiss,

Without their priests that needs must
glove it first,

Lest peradventure it offend thy lip!

Love Woman! Why, a very beast
thou art!

Thou must . . .

Lur. Peace, Husain!

Hus. Ay, but, spoiling all,
For all, else true things, substituting
false,

That they should dare spoil, of all
instincts, thine!

Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,

Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
And class them and allow them place
and play

So far, no farther—unabashed the while!

Thou with the soul that never can take rest—

Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
And never to be still,—wouldst thou
make war?

Oh, that is commendable, just and right!

'Come over,' say they, 'have the honour due

In living out thy nature! Fight thy best:

It is to be for Florence, not thyself!

For thee, it were a horror and a plague;
For us, when war is made for Florence,

How all is changed: the fire that fed
on earth

Now towers to heaven!'

Lur. And what sealed up so long
My Husain's mouth?

Hus. Oh, friend, oh, lord—for me,
What am I?—I was silent at thy
side,

Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
Thy foot that glows when in the heart
fresh blood

Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live
again!

Again love as thou likest, hate as free!
Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
To ask, before thy very limbs dare
move,

If Florence' welfare be concerned
thereby!

Lur. So clear what Florence must
expect of me?

Hus. Both armies against Florence!
Take revenge!

Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling
now,—

And after, in remembrance, year by
year—

And, with the dear conviction, die at
last!

She lies now at thy pleasure: pleasure
have!

Their vaunted intellect that gilds our
sense,

And blends with life, to show it better
by,

—How think'st thou?—I have turned
that light on them!

They called our thirst of war a transient
thing;

'The battle-element must pass away
From life,' they said, 'and leave a
tranquil world.'

—Master, I took their light and turned
it full

On that dull turgid vein they said
would burst

And pass away; and as I looked on
life,

Still everywhere I tracked this, though
it hid

And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
Changed oft the hue yet ever was the
same.

Why, 'twas all fighting, all their nobler
life!

All work was fighting, every harm—
defeat,

And every joy obtained—a victory!
Be not their dupe!

—Their dupe? That
hour is past!

Here stand'st thou in the glory and the
calm!

All is determined! Silence for me now!
[*HUSAIN goes.*]

Lur. Have I heard all?

Dom. [*advancing from the background.*]

No, Luria, I remain!

Not from the motives these have urged
on thee,

Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
And pregnant each with sure seeds of
decay,

As failing of sustainment from thyself,
—Neither from low revenge, nor

selfishness,
Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor
all,

Shalt thou abolish Florence! I pro-
claim

The angel in thee, and reject the
sprites

Which ineffectual crowd about his
strength,

And mingle with his work and claim a share !
 Inconsciously to the augustest end
 Thou hast arisen : second not in rank
 So much as time, to him who first
 ordained
 That Florence, thou art to destroy,
 should be.
 Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke
 first
 The pride of lonely power, the life
 apart,
 And made the eminences, each to each,
 Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
 Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath
 their tops ;
 So the few famous men of old combined,
 And let the multitude rise underneath,
 And reach them, and unite—so Florence
 grew :
 Braccio speaks true, it was well worth
 the price.
 But when the sheltered many grew in
 pride
 And grudging the station of the elected
 ones,
 Who, greater than their kind, are truly
 great
 Only in voluntary servitude—
 Time was for thee to rise, and thou art
 here.
 Such plague possessed this Florence :
 who can tell
 The mighty girth and greatness at the
 heart
 Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
 She pulled down in her envy ? Who
 as I,
 The light weak parasite born but to
 twine
 Round each of them and, measuring
 them, live ?
 My light love keeps the matchless circle
 safe,
 My slender life proves what has pass'd
 away.
 I lived when they departed ; lived to
 cling
 To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou
 wouldst rise
 And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I
 knew.

I have done nothing ; all was thy
 strong heart.
 But a bird's weight can break the
 infant tree
 Which after holds an aery in its arms,
 And 'twas my care that nought should
 warp thy spire
 From rising to the height ; the roof is
 reached :
 Break through and there extends the
 sky above !
 Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'Tis man's
 cause !
 Fail thou, and thine own fall is least to
 dread !
 Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
 Encouragest her sin so much the more—
 And while the bloody Past is justified,
 Thou all the surelier dost the Future
 wrong,
 The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet
 unborn,
 That, greater than thyself, are reached
 o'er thee
 Who giv'st the vantage-ground their
 foes require,
 As o'er my prostrate House thyself
 wast reached !
 Man calls thee, God requites thee. All
 is said,
 The mission of my House fulfilled at
 last :
 And the mere woman, speaking for
 herself,
 Reserves speech—it is now no woman's
 time.

[DOMIZIA goes.

Lur. Thus at the last must figure
 Luria, then !
 Doing the various work of all his
 friends,
 And answering every purpose save his
 own.
 No doubt, 'tis well for them to wish ;
 but him—
 After the exploit what were left ?
 Perchance
 A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
 At having brought successfully to bear
 'Gainst Florence' self her own especial
 arms,—
 Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer
 strength

From Moorish blood than feeds the
 northern wit—
 But after!—once the easy vengeance
 willed,
 Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
 —(Not in her Domes and Towers and
 Palaces,
 Not even in a dream, that outrage!)—
 low,
 As shamed in her own eyes henceforth
 for ever,
 Low, for the rival cities round to see,
 Conquered and pardoned by a hireling
 Moor!
 —For him, who did the irreparable
 wrong,
 What would be left, his life's illusion
 fled,—
 What hope or trust in the forlorn wide
 world?
 How strange that Florence should
 mistake me so!
 Whence grew this? What withdrew
 her faith from me?
 Some cause! These fretful-blooded
 children talk
 Against their mother, — they are
 wronged, they say—
 Notable wrongs her smile makes up
 again!
 So, taking fire at each supposed of-
 fence,
 They may speak rashly, suffer for their
 speech:
 But what could it have been in word or
 deed
 That injured me? Some one word
 spoken more
 Out of my heart, and all had changed
 perhaps!
 My fault, it must have been,—for,
 what gain they?
 Why risk the danger? See, what I
 could do!
 And my fault, wherefore visit upon
 them,
 My Florentines? The generous re-
 venge,
 I meditate! To stay here passively,
 Go at their summons, be as they dis-
 pose—
 Why, if my very soldiers keep their
 ranks,

And if I pacify my chiefs, what then?
 I ruin Florence, teach her friend,
 mistrust,
 Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
 And when she finds one day, as she
 must find,
 The strange mistake, and how my heart
 was hers,
 Shall it console me, that my Floren-
 tines
 Walk with a sadder step, a graver face,
 Who took me with such frankness,
 praised me so,
 At the glad outset? Had they loved
 me less,
 They had less feared what seemed a
 change in me.
 And after all, who did the harm? Not
 they!
 How could they interpose with those
 old fools
 In the council? Suffer for those old
 fools' sakes—
 They, who made pictures of me, sang
 the songs
 About my battles? Ah, we Moors get
 blind
 Out of our proper world where we can
 see!
 The sun that guides is closer to us!
 There—
 There, my own orb! He sinks from
 out the sky!
 Why, there! a whole day has he
 blessed the land,
 My land, our Florence all about the
 hills,
 The fields and gardens, vineyards,
 olive-grounds,
 All have been blest—and yet we
 Florentines
 With minds intent upon our battle here,
 Found that he rose too soon, or else too
 late,
 Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa
 more—
 And so we wronged him! Does he
 turn in ire
 To burn the earth that cannot under-
 stand?
 Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
 His task once ended? Night wipes
 blame away.

Another morning from my East shall
spring
And find all eyes at leisure, more dis-
posed
To watch and understand its work, no
doubt.

So, praise the new sun, the successor
praise,

Praise the new Luria, and forget the old!

[*Taking a phial from his breast.*

—Strange! This is all I brought from
my own land

To help me: Europe would supply the
rest,

All needs beside, all other helps save
this!

I thought of adverse fortune, battles
lost,

The natural upbraidings of the loser,

And then this quiet remedy to seek

At end of the disastrous day—

[*He drinks.*

'Tis sought!

This was my happy triumph-morning:
Florence

Is saved: I drink this, and ere night,—
die!—Strange!

ACT V

NIGHT.

LURIA and PUCCIO.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk
this: well,

Such were my projects for the city's
good,

To help her in attack or by defence.

Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late
may take

Our foresight by surprise thro' chance
and change;

But not a little we provide against

—If you see clear on every point.

Puc. Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, if
you count words,

Yet for an understanding ear enough;
And all that my brief stay permits,
beside.

Nor must you blame me, as I sought to
teach

My elder in command, or threw a doubt

Upon the very skill, it comforts me
To know I leave,—your steady soldier-
ship

Which never failed me: yet, because it
seemed

A stranger's eye might haply note
defect

That skill, through use and custom,
overlooks,

I have gone into the old cares once
more,

As if I had to come and save again

Florence—that May—that morning!
'Tis night now.

Well—I broke off with? . . .

Puc. Of the past campaign

You spoke—of measures to be kept in
mind

For future use.

Lur. True, so . . . but, time—
no time!

As well end here: remember this, and
me!

Farewell now!

Puc. Dare I speak?

Lur. —The South o' the river—
How is the second stream called . . . no,
—the third?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's-cast from the
fording-place.

To the East,—the little mount's name?
Puc. Lupo.

Lur. Ay!

Ay—there the tower, and all that side
is safe!

With San Romano, West of Evola,

San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,

Five towers in all,—forget not!

Puc. Fear not me!

Lur. —Nor to memorialize the
Council now,

I' the easy hour, on those battalions'
claim

On the other side, by Staggia on the hills,
Who kept the Sienese at check!

Puc. One word—

Sir, I must speak! That you submit
yourself

To Florence' bidding, howsoe'er it
prove,

And give up the command to me—is
much,

Too much, perhaps : but what you tell me now,

Even will affect the other course you choose—

Poor as it may be, peril even that !

Refuge you seek at Pisa : yet these plans

All militate for Florence, all conclude Your formidable work to make her queen

Of the country,—which her rivals rose against

When you began it,—which to interrupt,

Pisa would buy you off at any price !

You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help, With this made perfect and on record ?

Lur. I—

At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say ?

Puc. Where are you going, then ? You must decide

On leaving us, a silent fugitive, Alone, at night—you, stealing through our lines,

Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape

To painfully begin the world once more, With such a Past, as it had never been !

Where are you going ?

Lur. Not so far, my Puccio, But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise

(If you mind praise from your old captain yet)

Each happy blow you strike for Florence !

Puc. —Ay, But ere you gain your shelter, what may come ?

For see—though nothing's surely known as yet,

Still—truth must out—I apprehend the worst.

If mere suspicion stood for certainty Before, there's nothing can arrest the steps

Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.

Forgive her fifty times, it matters not ! And having disbelieved your innocence,

How can she trust your magnanimity ? You may do harm to her—why then,

you will !

And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.

Have you a friend to count on ?

Lur. One sure friend.

Puc. Potent ?

Lur. All-potent.

Puc. And he is apprised !

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So !—Then I, put

in your place, Making my profit of all done by you,

Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,

To these, the State's gift, now add this of yours—

That I may take to my peculiar store All your instructions to do Florence good.

And if, by putting some few happily In practice, I should both advantage

her And draw down honour on myself,—what then ?

Lur. Do it, my Puccio ! I shall know and praise.

Puc. Though, so, men say, ' mark what we gain by change

—A Puccio for a Luria ! '

Lur. Even so !

Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,

Would I accept one office save my own, Fill any other than my rightful post

Here at your feet, my Captain and my Lord !

That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,

Ere a man settle, soul and body, down Into his true place and take rest for ever !

Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-hand,

And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,

And all went wrong and painfully enough,—

No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,

All the jar stops, and there is peace at once !

I am yours now,—a tool your right-hand wields !

God's love, that I should live, the man I am,

On orders, warrants, patents and the like,

As if there were no glowing eye i' the world,
To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats!

For, see—my doubt, where is it?—
fear? 'tis flown!

And Florence and her anger are a tale
To scare a child! Why, half-a-dozen words

Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,

Her error, my past folly—and all's right,

And you are Luria, our great chief again!

Or at the worst—which worst were best of all—

To exile or to death I follow you!

Lur. Thanks, Puccio! Let me use the privilege

You grant me: if I still command you. —stay!

Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,

And not successor: let me, as of old,
Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours—

Still triumph, one for both. There! Leave me now!

You cannot disobey my first command? Remember what I spoke of Jacopo, And what you promised to concert with him!

Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell—

You shall be by me when the sentence comes. [*Puccio goes.*]

So, there's one Florentine returns again!

Out of the genial morning-company,
One face is left to take into the night.

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for your commands, Sir.
Lur. What, so soon?
I thank your ready presence and fair word.

I used to notice you in early days
As of the other species, so to speak,
Those watchers of the lives of us who act—

That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts.

So, I propound this to your faculty
As you would tell me, were a town to take

. . . That is of old. I am departing hence

Under these imputations; that is nought—

I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,

Hardly a name behind me in the land,
Being a stranger: all the more behoves

That I regard how altered were the case
With natives of the country, Florentines,

On whom the like mischance should fall: the roots

O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—

No root of mine will throb—you understand.

But I had predecessors, Florentines,
Accused as I am now, and punished so—

The Traversari: you know more than I
How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.

Now, Puccio, who succeeds me in command,

Both served them and succeeded, in due time;

He knows the way, holds proper documents,

And has the power to lay the simple truth

Before an active spirit, as I know yours:

And also there's Tiburzio, my new friend,

Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
He being the chivalric soul we know.

I put it to your instinct—were't not well,

—A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—

If you who witness, and have borne a share

Involuntarily, in my mischance,
Should, of your proper motion, set

your skill
To indicate—that is, investigate

The reason or the wrong of what befell
Those famous citizens, your countrymen?

Nay, you shall promise nothing: but reflect,
And if your sense of justice prompt you—good!

Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear

To all men's eyes, as yours, my Lord, to mine—

Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied!

For me, a straw thrown up into the air, My testimony goes for a straw's worth.

I used to hold by the instructed brain,

And move with Braccio as the master-wind;

The heart leads surelier: I must move with you—

As greatest now, who ever were the best. So, let the last and humblest of your servants

Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,

And offer homage, by obeying you!

[*JACOPO goes.*]

Lur. Another!—Luria goes not poorly forth!

If we could wait! The only fault's with time:

All men become good creatures—but so slow!

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more?

Dom. Domizia, that you knew, Performed her task, and died with it.

'Tis I,
Another woman, you have never known. Let the Past sleep now.

Lur. I have done with it.

Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows!

One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach

With her whole energies and die content,—

So like a wall at the world's end it stood,

With nought beyond to live for,—is it reached?

Already are new un dreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending further

To a new object;—there's another world!

See! I have told the purpose of my life. 'Tis gained—you are decided, well or ill—

You march on Florence, or submit to her—

My work is done with you, your brow declares.

But—leave you? More of you seems yet to reach!

I stay for what I just begin to see.

Lur. So that you turn not to the Past!

Dom. You trace

Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,

Which sought its ends and disregarded yours?

Lur. Speak not against your nature: best, each keep

His own—you, yours—most, now, when I keep mine,

—At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.

God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,

We would confound: the lesser has its use,

Which, when it apes the greater, is foregone.

I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine; But, punished properly, can end, a Moor.

Beside, there is what makes me understand

Your nature: I have seen it.

Dom. Aught like mine?

Lur. In my own East... if you would stoop and help

My barbarous illustration! it sounds ill—

Yet there's no wrong at bottom—rather, praise.

Dom. Well?

Lur. We have creatures there, which if you saw

The first time, you would doubtless marvel at,

For their surpassing beauty, craft, and strength.

And though it were a lively moment's shock

Wherein you found the purpose of
those tongues
That seemed innocuous in their lambent
play,
Yet, once made know such grace re-
quires such guard,
Your reason soon would acquiesce, I
think,
In the wisdom which made all things
for the best—
So, take them, good with ill, con-
tentedly,
The prominent beauty with the secret
sting.
I am glad to have seen you wondrous
Florentines :

Yet . . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East !

How nearer God we were ! He glows
above

With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours !
We feel Him, nor by painful reason
know !

The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there ; Now it is, as it was
Then ;

All changes at His instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other
work !

His hand is still engaged upon His
world—

Man's praise can forward it, Man's
prayer suspend,

For is not God all-mighty ?—To recast
The world, erase old things and make
them new,

What costs it Him ? So, man breathes
nobly there !

And inasmuch as Feeling, the East's
gift,

Is quick and transient—comes, and lo,
is gone—

While Northern Thought is slow and
durable,

Surely a mission was reserved for me,
Who, born with a perception of the power
And use of the North's thought for us
of the East,

Should have stayed there and turned it
to account,

Giving Thought's character and per-
manence

To the too-transitory Feeling there—
Writing God's messages in mortal
words !

Instead of which, I leave my fated field
For this where such a task is needed
least,

Where all are born consummate in the art
I just perceive a chance of making
mine,—

And then, deserting thus my early post,
I wonder that the men I come among
Mistake me ! There, how all had
understood,

Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp
and keep,

Fresh instinct to translate them into
law !

Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task
achieve,

More needful even : who have brought
fresh stuff

For us to mould, interpret and prove
right,—

New feelings fresh from God, which,
could we know

O' the instant, where had been our need
of them ?

—Whose life re-teaches us what life
should be,

What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
All, their revelation taught us so long
since

That, having mere tradition of the
fact,—

Truth copied falteringly from copies
faint,

The early traits all dropped away,—we
said

On sight of faith like yours, 'so looks
not faith

We understand, described and taught
before.'

But still, the truth was shown ; and
though at first

It suffer from our haste, yet trace by
trace

Old memories reappear, the likeness
grows,

Our slow Thought does its work, and
all's re-known.

Oh, noble Luria! what you have decreed

I see not, but no animal revenge,
No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—

It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
Traced for me by convention and mistake,

Has gained that calm approving eye
and brow!

Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
To his own soul, and I will trust to him!

Lur. In time!

Dom. How, Luria?

Lur. It is midnight now,

And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step.

Lur. I feel it, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him.

Aught else?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops

Southward—

Lur. Toward Florence? Have out instantly...

Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth!

In—quick—'tis nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, and PUCCIO.

Lur. Tiburzio?—not at Pisa?

Tib. I return
From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think

By such procedure I have served her best.
A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models for the mass

Are singly of more value than they all.
Such man are you, and such a time is this
That your sole fate concerns a nation
more

Than its apparent welfare; and to prove

Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,

Imports it far beyond the day's event,
Its battle's loss or gain: the mass remains,—

Keep but the model safe, new men will rise

To study it, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's having lived.

I might go try my fortune as you bade,
And joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,

Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done;

But where find Luria for our sons to see?

No, I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Her full success to Florence, making clear
Your probity, as none else could: I spoke—

And it shone clearly!

Lur. Ah—till Braccio spoke!

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—

His old great error, and return to knowledge:

Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should droop the head,

I, whom shame rests with! yet I dare look up,

Sure of your pardon when I sue for it,
Knowing you wholly—so, let midnight end!

Sunrise approaches! Still you answer not?

The shadow of the night is past away;
Our circling faces here 'mid which it grew
Are all that felt it: they close round you now

To witness its completest vanishing.
Speak, Luria! Here begins your true career:

Look up to it! All now is possible,
The glory and the grandeur of each dream:

And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
Save one—(nay, now your word must come at last)

—That you would punish Florence!

Hus. [pointing to LURIA's dead body.]
That is done.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

1846

PART FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY
OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE: AND PART SECOND, ITS PROSE

PART I

Inside LUITOLFO'S house at Faenza.

CHIAPPINO, EULALIA.

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo?
Night's fast falling,
And 'twas scarce sunset . . . had the
Ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's
House?

I think not: all he had to say would
take

Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our
lord

The Provost were less friendly to your
friend

Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not
you?

Why are you silent when so many times
I turn and speak to you?

Ch. That's good!

Eu. You laugh?

Ch. Yes, I had fancied nothing that
bears price

In the whole world was left to call my
own;

And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and
blood,

There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till
you spoke!

—Counting, you see, as 'nothing' the
permission

To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence: well, go silence with the
rest

Of the world's good! What can I say,
shall serve?

Eu. This,—lest you, even more than
needs, embitter

Our parting: say your wrongs have
cast, for once,

A cloud across your spirit!

Ch. How a cloud?

Eu. No man nor woman loves you,
did you say?

Ch. My God, were 't not for Thee!

Eu. Ay, God remains,
Even did men forsake you.

Ch. Oh, not so!

Were 't not for God, I mean, what hope
of truth—

Speaking truth, hearing truth, would
stay with man?

I, now—the homeless, friendless, penni-
less,

Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak
to you,—

Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for
my death,

(The thing that tempts me most) help
speaking lies

About your friendship, and Luitolfo's
courage,

And all our townfolk's equanimity,—
Through sheer incompetence to rid

myself
Of the old miserable lying trick

Caught from the liars I have lived with,
—God,

Did I not turn to Thee! it is Thy
prompting

I dare to be ashamed of, and Thy
counsel

Would die along my coward lip, I
know—

But I do turn to Thee! This craven
tongue,

These features which refuse the soul its
way,

Reclaim Thou! Give me truth—
truth, power to speak

—And after be sole present to approve

The spoken truth!—or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, might approve?

Eu. Ah, well—
Keep silence, then, Chiappino!

Ch. You would hear.
And shall now,—why the thing we're pleased to style

My gratitude to you and all your friends

For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service—and no more.

I was born here, so was Luitolfo,—both
At one time, much with the same circumstance

Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night

Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.

'Why?' asks the world: 'Because,'
replies the world

To its complacent self, 'these play-fellows,

Who took at church the holy-water drop

One from the other's finger, and so forth,—

Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper

Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,

Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
A happy-tempered bringer of the best

Out of the worst; who bears with what's past cure,

And puts so good a face on 't—wisely passive

Where action's fruitless, while he remedies

In silence what the foolish rail against;
A man to smooth such natures as parade

Of opposition must exasperate—
No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak

Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
At lucky junctures; one who won't forego

The after-battle work of binding wounds,

Because, forsooth, he'd have to bring himself

To side with wound-inflictors for their leave!

—Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat

What comes so glibly from the common mouth,

About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend?

Eu. Because, that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch. I thought
You would be readier with the other half

Of the world's story,—my half!—Yet, 'tis true,

For all the world does say it! Say your worst!

True, I thank God, I ever said 'you sin,'

When a man did sin: if I could not say it,

I glared it at him,—if I could not glare it,

I prayed against him,—then my part seemed over;

God's may begin yet—so it will, I trust!

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we?

Ch. What's 'me'
That you use well or ill? It's Man, in me,

All your successes are an outrage to, •
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say!

Here's our Faenza birthplace; they send here

A Provost from Ravenna: how he rules,

You can at times be eloquent about.

'Then, end his rule!'—'Ah yes, one stroke does that!

But patience under wrong works slow and sure.

Must violence still bring peace forth?
He, beside,

Returns so blandly one's obeisance!
ah—

Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
Some human sympathy which, once excite,

And all the lump were leavened quietly—

So, no more talk of striking, for this time !'

But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear

These pretty takings-up and layings-down

Our cause, just as you think occasion suits !

Enough of earnest, is there ? You'll play, will you ?

Diversify your tactics,—give submission,

Obsequiousness and flattery a'turn,
While we die in our misery patient deaths ?

We all are outraged then, and I the first !

I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,

Each beck and bend, each . . . all you do and are,

I hate !

Eu. We share a common censure, then.

'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part

Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, Lady ?

'Come, on your own ground, Lady,—from yourself,

(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine,)

What have I got to be so grateful for ?
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other

Paid by Luitolfo ?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino !

Ch. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most !

—Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,

Your prosperous smooth lover presently,

Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your husband : well—

I loved you.

Eu. Hold !

Ch. You knew it, years ago.

When my voice faltered and my eyes grew dim

Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—

My voice that greatens when there's need to curse

The People's Provost to their heart's content,

—My eyes, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,

Banishes now because he cannot bear,—

You knew . . . but you do your parts—my part, I :

So be it ! you flourish—I decay. All's well !

Eu. I hear this for the first time.

Ch. The fault's there ?

Then, my days spoke not, and my nights of fire

Were voiceless ? Then, the very heart may burst

Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech

Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus ?

Eulalia ! truce with toying for this once !

A banished fool, who troubles you to-night

For the last time—why, what's to fear from me ?

You knew I loved you !

Eu. Not so, on my faith !

You were my now-affianced lover's friend—

Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.

All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit ;

See how your words come from you in a crowd !

Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself

In all that challenges respect and love :
Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.

I say all this by fascination, sure—
I am all but wed to one I love, yet listen !

It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs

Luitolfo pities . . .

Ch. —You too pity ? Do !
But hear first what my wrongs are ; so began

This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,

Was 't not enough that I must strive (I saw)

To grow so far familiar with your charms

As next contrive some way to win them
—which

To do, an age seemed far too little—for,
sco!

We all aspire to Heaven—and there is
Heaven

Above us—go there! Dare we go?
no, surely!

How dare we go without a reverent
pause,

A growing less unfit for Heaven?—
Even so,

I dared not speak: the greater fool, it
seems!

Was 't not enough to struggle with such
folly,

But I must have, beside, the very man
Whose slight, free, loose and incapacious
soul

Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er
he would

—Must have him load me with his
benefits

For fortune's fiercest stroke?

Eu. Justice to him
That's now entreating, at his risk
perhaps,

Justice for you! Did he once call
those acts

Of simple friendship—bounties, bene-
fits?

Ch. No—the straight course had
been to call them so—

Then, I had flung them back, and kept
myself

Unhampered, free as he to win the
prize

We both sought—but 'the gold was
dross,' he said,

'He loved me, and I loved him not—to
spurn

A trifle out of superfluity:

He had forgotten he had done as
much.

So had not I!—Henceforth, try as I
could

To take him at his word, there stood by
you

My benefactor—who might speak and
laugh

And urge his nothings—even banter me

Before you—but my tongue was tied.
A dream!

Let's wake: your husband . . . how
you shake at that!

Good—my revenge!

Eu. Why should I shake?

What forced,

Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride?

Ch. There's my revenge, that nothing
forces you.

No gratitude, no liking of the eye
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor
bond

Of habit—here so many times he came,
So much he spoke,—all these compose
the tie

That pulls you from me. Well, he paid
my fines,

Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe,
dish from table—

—He spoke a good word to the Provost
here—

Held me up when my fortunes fell away
—It had not looked so well to let me
drop—

Men take pains to preserve a tree-
stump, even,

Whose boughs they played beneath—
much more a friend.

But one grows tired of seeing, after the
first,

Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
Like me: I could not change—you
know the rest.

I've spoke my mind too fully out, for
once,

This morning to our Provost; so, ere
night

I leave the city on pain of death: and
now

On my account there's gallant inter-
cession

Goes forward—that's so graceful!—
and anon

He'll noisily come back: 'the inter-
cession

Was made and fails—all's over for us
both—

'Tis vain contending—I would better
go.

And I do go—and so, to you he turns
Light of a load; and ease of that
permits

His visage to repair its natural bland
Oeconomy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent. Thus, all are pleased—
you, with him,
He with himself, and all of you with me
—Who, say the citizens, had done far
better

In letting people sleep upon their woes,
If not possessed with talent to relieve
them

When once they woke;—but then I
had, they'll say,

Doubtless some unknown compensating
pride

In what I did; and as I seem content
With ruining myself, why, so should
they be:

And so they are, and so be with his
prize

The devil, when he gets them speedily!
Why does not your Luitolfo come?

I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo
path.

It seems you never loved me, then?

Eu. Chiappino!

Ch. Never?

Eu. Never.

Ch. That's sad: say what I might,
There was no helping being sure this
while

You loved me—love like mine must
have return,

I thought—no river starts but to some
sea.

And had you loved me, I could soon
devise

Some specious reason why you stifled
love,

Some fancied self-denial on your part,
Which made you choose Luitolfo; so,
excepting

From the wide condemnation of all
here,

One woman. Well, the other dream
may break!

If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, tho' in the vilest breast
'twere lodged,

I should, I think, be forced to love
again:

Else there's no right nor reason in the
world.

Eu. 'If you knew,' say you,—but I
did not know:

That's where you're blind, Chiappino!
—a disease

Which if I may remove, I'll not repent
The listening to. You cannot, will not,
see

How, place you but in every circum-
stance

Of us, you are just now indignant at,
You'd be as we.

Ch. I should be? . . . that, again!
I, to my Friend, my Country and my
Love,

Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines?

Eu. As we.

Ch. Now, I'll say something to
remember!

I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility—Spring shall
plant,

And Autumn garner to the end of
time:

I trust in God—the right shall be the
right

And other than the wrong, while He
endures:

I trust in my own soul, that can per-
ceive

The outward and the inward, nature's
good

And God's: so, seeing these men and
myself,

Having a right to speak, thus do I
speak.—

I'll not curse . . . God bears with them
—well may I—

But I—protest against their claiming
me.

I simply say, if that's allowable,
I would not . . . broadly . . . do as they
have done.

—God curse this townful of born
slaves, bred slaves,

Branded into the blood and bone,
slaves! Curse

Whoever loved, above his liberty,

House, land or life! and . . .

[*A knocking without.*

—bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo!

Eu. How he knocks!

Ch. The peril, Lady!

' Chiappino, I have run a risk! My God!
How when I prayed the Provost—
(he's my friend)—

To grant you a week's respite of his
sentence

That confiscates your goods, and
exiles you,

He shrugged his shoulder—I say,
shrugged it! Yes,

And fright of that drove all else from
my head.

Here's a good purse of *scudi*—off with
you!

Lest of that shrug come what God only
knows!

The *scudi*-friend, they're trash—no
thanks, I beg!

Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's
suburb

Whose double taxes you appealed
against,

In discomposure at your ill-success
Is apt to stone you: there, there—only
go!

Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.
Shake . . . oh, you hurt me, so you
squeeze my wrist!

—Is it not thus you'll speak, adven-
turous friend?

[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO
rushes in, his garments dis-
ordered.

Eu. Luitolfo! Blood?

Luit. There's more—
and more of it!

Eulalia—take the garment . . . no . . .
you, friend!

You take it and the blood from me—
you dare!

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you? where's
the wound?

Ch. 'Who,' say you?

The man with many a touch of virtue
yet!

The Provost's friend has proved too
frank of speech,

And this comes of it. Miserable hound!
This comes of temporizing, as I said!

Here's fruit of your smooth speeches
and fair looks!

Now see my way! As God lives, I go
straight

To the palace and do justice, once for all!

Luit. What says he?

Ch. I'll do justice on him.

Luit. Him?

Ch. The Provost.

Luit. I've just killed him.

Eu. Oh, my God!

Luit. My friend, they're on my trace
—they'll have me—now!

They're round him, busy with him—
soon they'll find

He's past their help, and then they'll
be on me!

Chiappino! save Eulalia . . . I forget . . .
Were you not bound . . . for . . .

Ch. Lugo!

Luit. Ah—yes—yes—

That was the point I prayed of him to
change.

Well—go—be happy . . . is Eulalia safe?
They're on me!

Ch. 'Tis through me they
reach you, then!

Friend, seem the man you are! Look
arms—that's right.

Now tell me what you've done; explain
how you

That still professed forbearance, still
preached peace,

Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace
for, Chiappino?

I tried peace—did that promise, when
peace failed,

Strife should not follow? All my
peaceful days

Were just the prelude to a day like this.
I cried 'You call me "friend"—save
my true friend!

Save him, or lose me!'

Ch. But you never said
You meant to tell the Provost thus
and thus!

Luit. Why should I say it? What
else did I mean?

Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. 'Would so order it
You should not trouble him too soon
again.'

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip;
I poured my heart's store of indignant
words

Out on him: then—I know not! He
retorted,

And I . . . some staff lay there to hand
—I think

He bade his servants thrust me out—I
struck . . .

Ah, they come! Fly you, save your-
selves, you two!

The dead back-weight of the beheading
axe!

The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews
and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the
Place! Farewell,

Chiappino! You can work no good to
us—

Much to yourself; believe not, all the
world

Must needs be cursed henceforth!

Ch. And you?

Eu. I stay.

Ch. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am
master here!

This was my coarse disguise; this
paper shows

My path of flight and place of refuge—
see—

Lugo—Argenta—past San Nicolo—
Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!
Put on the cloak! His people have to
fetch

A compass round about. There's time
enough

Ere they can reach us—so you straight-
way make

For Lugo . . . Nay, he hears not! On
with it—

The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me?
See—

He obeys he knows not how. Then, if
I must . . .

Answer me! Do you know the Lugo
gate?

Eu. The north-west gate, over the
bridge!

Luit. I know!

Ch. Well, there—you are not fright-
ened? all my route

Is traced in that: at Venice you'll
escape

Their power. Eulalia, I am master
here!

[*Shouts from without. He pushes
out LUITOLFO, who complies
mechanically.*

In time! nay, help me with him—So!
—he's gone.

Eu. What have you done? On you,
perchance, all know

The Provost's hater, will men's ven-
geance fall

As our accomplice.

Ch. Mere accomplice? See!

[*Putting on LUITOLFO's vest.*

Now, Lady, am I true to my profession,
Or one of these?

Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?

Ch. Die for him.

Eu. Well done!

[*Shouts increase.*

Ch. How the people tarry!

I can't be silent . . . I must speak . . . or
sing—

How natural to sing now!

Eu. Hush and pray!

We are to die; but even I perceive
'Tis not a very hard thing so to die.

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful
eyes,

Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's
life

With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart
goes forth

Each evening after that wild son of hers,
To track his thoughtless footstep
through the streets:

How easy for them both to die like
this!

I am not sure that I could live as
they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds! They
pass the gate? Yes!—No!—

One torch is in the court-yard. Here
flock all.

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped.
What cries!

Ch. If they would drag one to the
market-place,

One might speak there!

Eu. List, list!

Ch. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost!

[*The populace speaking together.*] 'Twas
Chiappino, friends!

Our saviour.—The best man at last as
first!

He who first made us see what chains
we wore,

He also strikes the blow that shatters
them,

He at last saves us—our best citizen !
—Oh, have you only courage to speak
now ?

My eldest son was christened a year
since

'Cino' to keep Chiappino's name in
mind—

Cino, for shortness merely, you observe !
The city's in our hands.—The guards
are fled ;

Do you, the cause of all, come down—
come down—

Come forth to counsel us, our chief, our
king,

Whate'er rewards you ! Choose your
own reward !

The peril over, its reward begins !
Come and harangue us in the market-
place !

Eu. Chiappino !

Ch. Yes . . . I understand
your eyes !

You think I should have promptlier
disowned

This deed with its strange unforeseen
success,

In favour of Luitolfo—but the peril,
So far from ended, hardly seems begun.
To-morrow, rather, when a calm
succeeds,

We easily shall make him full amends :
And meantime . . . if we save them as
they pray,

And justify the deed by its effects ?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had
denied at once.

Ch. I know my own intention, be
assured !

All's well ! Precede us, fellow-citizens !

PART II

The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace. assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.

First-Bystander (To LUIT.) You, a
friend of Luitolfo's ? Then, your friend
is vanished,—in all probability killed

on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino !

Luit. He the new Provost ?

Second Bys. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established usage : for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the old Provost's successor ? Impossible ! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night ?

Third Bys. You were Luitolfo's friend ? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop ! He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us : and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying ? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning—might it not have been so ?

Third Bys. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha!

Luit. [*Aside.*] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

Third Bys. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir...

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantries! I know Chiappino better.

First Bys. (Our friend has the bile! after all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

First Bys. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable; up we

rose, a mass of us, men, women, children—out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant—we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, 'What will Rome say?' began everybody—(you know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome). And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate—trots briskly through the streets humming a '*Cur fremuère gentes,*' and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. 'One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!' (laughing gently to himself) —'Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost—and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile,—I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves,—and now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him—and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find

admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next.'—And thus he ran on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luit. Do you see? I recognize him there!

Third Bys. Ay, but mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—'And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?'—returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. 'Oh, are you there?' quoth Chiappino:—'In that, I agree,' returns Chiappino, and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

First Bys. Why, not altogether at once. For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—whereas what right,' asked he, 'has any man to wish to be superior to another?'—whereat, 'Ah, Sir,' answers the Legate, 'this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself

set about attacking yourself—for see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, that are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life. And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same,—you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!' And so chatting, they glided off arm in arm.

Luit. And the result is . . .

First Bys. Why, that a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's goods,—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luit. (withdrawing a little.) I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of, what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge—what could I else?—But if what they say be true—if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a Palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly.

Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me . . . turn and see it . . . the old Provost's House to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there, a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not rather make the best of such an opportunity, than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So, the love breaks away too!

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding the so many and so various loves, united in the love of a woman,—manifest uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. I shall give the intellectual part of my love to Men, the mighty dead, or illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose? and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does friendship go too? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author?—

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation—yet to which all my thought and life

directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not. He would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA stands apart.

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!—By your leave, Sir! Perform? What does the lady say of Performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust Profession, only Performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, Sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their professions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance—which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances,—the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, 'I will repay you!'—for a favour done him: so, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him—gives him half the land, half the money, half the kegs of wine in the cellar. 'Good,' say you—and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin

Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs, and all the money, and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered.—To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all?

Ch. I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (—avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do!)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please? Thus God serves us!

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogni. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your Love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court—send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems—so shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a Paradise by her,—as these western lands by Spain—though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to

kiss : don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips ! You understand my humour by this time ? I help men to carry out their own principles : if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten !

Ch. But these are my private affairs ; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently : for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged . . . and heretofore by myself . . . incompatible with its existence—when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one . . .

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—new truths, old truths ! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world—we know all we shall ever know, and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we *do* know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms ; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others : and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time. As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible ! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business :—you have got a truth in your head about the right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect—but what then ? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without

the help of a good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones : and as when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there ! to what will it not prove applicable !—' Contradictions ? '—Of course there were, say you !

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply ?

Ogni. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocates of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good, and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances—to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spent their life in pushing it onward as those who gave theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you : but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see ! By the side of such a rejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, ' Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle ; I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving '—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, ' I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, and from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally ! ' Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. He of Gath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other. But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a *spell* of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionably magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side. And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, so I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action. I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only,—but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has His archangels and consorts with them: though He made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more

disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there is a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you!—That is the generous way. Cry—emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go! The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, 'Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!'—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as 'Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require.' Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this—that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in His place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe!

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging

the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

Ogni. Not I! (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish, a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power; wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural Lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now! there indeed is a virtue to be revered!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatto the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni. What else should Stiatto pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No—or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty already.

Ogni. Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatto's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting. I only desired to do justice to

the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatto we were talking of; who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen,—heard too plainly 'hiss, hiss, hiss,' increase every moment: till at last the man fell senseless—not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve.

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask?—to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni. Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part: you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time.

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni. Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost...

Ch. Ha!

Ogni. Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni. Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you...

Ogni. Many more such rumours reach me, friend, than I choose to receive: those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time for entry with

effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend, after all ! My good friends—(nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost ?—his successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt, bare justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know ?

Luitolfo. [coming forward.] I !

All. Luitolfo !

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger : I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still : I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino ; to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni. Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you ?—Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text 'Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' To your house, Luitolfo ! Still silent, my patriotic friend ? Well, that is a good sign, however. And you

will go aside for a time ? That is better still. I understand—it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody ; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so,—they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid ; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he has grown six feet high, black and bearded : but, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion,—and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now—(Ay, good-bye to you ! He turns round the north-west gate : going to Lugo again ? Good-bye !)—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's Palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home. I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.

IN A BALCONY

A SCENE

1855

In a Balcony.

CONSTANCE and NORBERT.

Nor. Now.*Con.* Not now.*Nor.* Give me them again, those hands—

Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!

Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through.

You cruellest, you dearest in the world, Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask—

How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?

There she stays waiting for me, here stand you.

Some time or other this was to be asked; Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—

Let me ask now, Love!

Con. Do, and ruin us.*Nor.* Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.

How I do love you! give my love its way!

A man can have but one life and one death,

One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—

Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine,

Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,

Hold you and have you, and then die away

If God please, with completion in my soul.

Con. I am not yours then? how content this man?

I am not his, who change into himself, Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,

Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,

Give all that was of me away to him

So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,

Takes part with him against the woman here,

Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw As caring that the world be cognisant

How he loves her and how she worships him.

You have this woman, not as yet that world.

Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me By saving what I cease to care about,

The courtly name and pride of circumstance—

The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with

Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;

Just that the world may slip from under you—

Just that the world may cry 'So much for him—

The man predestined to the heap of crowns:

There goes his chance of winning one, at least!

Nor. The world!*Con.* You love it. Love me quite as well,

And see if I shall pray for this in vain! Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

Nor. You pray for—what, in vain?*Con.* Oh my heart's heart,

How I do love you, Norbert!—that is right!

But listen, or I take my hands away. You say, 'let it be now'—you would go now

And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,

You love me—so you do, thank God !

Nor. Thank God !

Con. Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,

And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her

My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,

Listening to me. You are the minister,
The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.

To-night completes your wonderful year's-work

(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
That junction of two crowns, on her sole head,

Herhouse had only dreamed of anciently.
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,

To-night's feast makes authentic.
Whose the praise ?

Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved

What turned the many heads and broke the hearts ?

You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven.

Next comes the Queen's turn. 'Name your own reward !'

With leave to clench the Past, chain the To-come,

Put out an arm and touch and take the sun

And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,—
You choose the single thing she will not grant ;

Nay, very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralize your work.

At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand ?

Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief

The Queen is generous,—nay, is just ?

Con. There, there !
So men make women love them, while they know

No more of women's hearts than . . .
look you here,

You that are just and generous beside,

Make it your own case. For example now,

I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—

Why ? do you know why ? I'll instruct you, then—

The kiss, because you have a name at court,

This hand and this, that you may shut in each

A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible ! Apply it to the Queen—
Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak.

'I was a nameless man ; you needed me :

Why did I proffer you my aid ? there stood

A certain pretty cousin at your side.
Why did I make such common cause with you ?

Access to her had not been easy else.
You give my labours here abundant praise ?

'Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.

How shall your gratitude discharge itself ?

Give me her hand !'

Nor. And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just ? just—generous or no !

Con. Yes, just. You love a rose ; no harm in that :

But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom ? mine, you said—

Then, mine you still must say or else be false.

You told the Queen you served her for herself :

If so, to serve her was to serve yourself,
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face !
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,

One sees the twenty pictures ; there's a life

Better than life, and yet no life at all.
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,

Pictures all round her ! why, she sees the world,

Can recognize its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,

Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,

Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
And who shall question that she knows them all,
In better semblance than the things outside ?
Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion, with the painted lion there—
You think she'll understand composedly ?
—Say, ' that 's his fellow in the hunting-piece
Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times ? '
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her :
How should it, with that life in these four walls,
That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother—friends, a heap,
Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
And every one of them alike a lie !
Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be ;
All better, all more grandiose than life,
Only no life ; mere cloth and surface-paint,
You feel, while you admire. How should she feel ?
Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled ?
Here's the truth—
She'll apprehend its value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty ?
You only have to say ' so men are made,
For this they act ; the thing has many names.

But this the right one : and now, Queen,
be just ! ’
And life slips back ; you lose her at the
word :
You do not even for amends gain me.
He must not understand ! oh, Norbert,
Norbert,
Do you not understand ?
Nor. The Queen’s the Queen,
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window o’er the people’s
street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures
glow :
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love ; what do I want with
rule ?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life’s good, my soul heard
one voice—
‘ The woman yonder, there’s no use of
life
But just to obtain her ! heap earth’s
woes in one
And bear them—make a pile of all
earth’s joys
And spurn them, as they help or help
not this ;
Only, obtain her ! ’—How was it to be ?
I found you were the cousin of the Queen ;
I must then serve the Queen to get to
you.
No other way. Suppose there had been
one,
And I, by saying prayers to some white
star
With promise of my body and my soul,
Might gain you,—should I pray the
star or no ?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve !
I served,
Helped, did what other servants failed
to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my
end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be
mine,
I therefore name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could
never be ?
Let her wake now. She thinks there
was more cause

In love of power, high fame, pure
loyalty ?
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their
lives
Chasing such shades. Then, I've a
fancy too ;
I worked because I want you with my
soul :
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now !
Con. Had I not loved you from the
very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out
thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might become impatient. What 's
conceived
Of us without here, by the folks within ?
Where are you now ? immersed in cares
of state—
Where am I now ?—intent on festal
robes—
We two, embracing under death's
spread hand !
What was this thought for, what that
scruple of yours
Which broke the council up ?—to bring
about
One minute's meeting in the corridor !
And then the sudden sleights, strange
secrecies,
Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards
of a look,
' Does she know ? does she not know ?
saved or lost ?'
A year of this compression's ecstasy
All goes for nothing ! you would give
this up
For the old way, the open way, the
world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells
his wife !
What tempts you ?—their notorious
happiness,
That you're ashamed of ours ? The
best you'll gain
Will be, the Queen grants all that you
require,
Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
And me at once, and gives us ample
leave
To live like our five hundred happy
friends.

The world will show us with officious
hand
Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,
Where we so oft have stolen across its
traps !
Get the world's warrant, ring the
falcons' feet,
And make it duty to be bold and swift,
Which long ago was nature. Have it so !
We never hawked by rights till flung
from fist ?
Oh, the man's thought !—no woman's
such a fool.
Nor. Yes, the man's thought and
my thought, which is more—
One made to love you, let the world take
note !
Have I done worthy work ? be love's
the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred
against
By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies !
Set free my love, and see what love can
do
Shown in my life—what work will
spring from that !
The world is used to have its business
done
On other grounds, find great effects
produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives
in men's mouth.
So, good : but let my low ground shame
their high !
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's
life be true !
And love's the truth of mine. Time
prove the rest !
I choose to wear you stamped all over
me,
Your name upon my forehead and my
breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the
ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their
pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love
fall off.
Permit this, Constance ! Love has been
so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and
through,

That now it's all of me and must have way.

Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,

Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,

That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,

Trembling at last to its assured result—

Then think of this revulsion ! I resume

Life after death, (it is no less than life,

After such long unlovely labouring days)

And liberate to beauty life's great need

Of the beautiful, which, while it

prompted work,

Supprest itself crewhile. This eve's

the time—

This eve intense with yon first trembling

star

We seem to pant and reach ; scarce

ought between

The earth that rises and the heaven that

bends ;

All nature self-abandoned, every tree

Flung as it will, pursuing its own

thoughts

And fixed so, every flower and every

weed,

No pride, no shame, no victory, no

defeat ;

All under God, each measured by itself.

These statues round us stand abrupt,

distinct,

The strong in strength, the weak in

weakness fixed,

The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,

The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to

her rose :

See God's approval on His universe !

Let us do so—aspire to live as these

In harmony with truth, ourselves being

true !

Take the first way, and let the second

come !

My first is to possess myself of you ;

The music sets the march-step—forward,

then !

And there's the Queen, I go to claim

you of,

The world to witness, wonder and ap-

plaud.

Our flower of life breaks open. No

delay !

Con. And so shall we be ruined, both of us.

Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone—

You do not know her, were not born to it,

To feel what she can see or cannot see.

Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your

smile,

Generous as you are : for, in that thin

frame

Pain-twisted, punctured through and

through with cares,

There lived a lavish soul until it starved

Debarred all healthy food. Look to

the soul—

Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin

(The true man's-way) on justice and

your rights,

Exactions and acquittance of the Past !

Begin so—see what justice she will deal !

We women hate a debt as men a gift.

Suppose her some poor keeper of a

school

Whose business is to sit thro' summer-

months

And dole out children leave to go and

play,

Herself superior to such lightness—she

In the arm-chair's state and pedagogie

pomp,

To the life, the laughter, sun and youth

outside—

We wonder such a face looks black on

us ?

I do not bid you wake her tenderness,

(That were vain truly—none is left to

wake)

But, let her think her justice is engaged

To take the shape of tenderness, and

mark

If she'll not coldly pay its warmest need!

Does she love me, I ask you ? not a

whit :

Yet, thinking that her justice was en-

gaged

To help a kinswoman, she took me up—

Did more on that bare ground than

other loves

Would do on greater argument. For

me,

I have no equivalent of such cold kind

To pay her with, but love alone to give

If I give anything. I give her love :
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you
twice

That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Could lay the whole I did to love's
account,

Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
Declaring my success was recompense ;
It would be so, in fact : what were it
else ?

And then, once loose her generosity,—
Oh, how I see it ! then, were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it offer what I really take,
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
Her value as the next thing to the
Queen's—

Since none loves Queens directly, none
dares that,

And a thing's shadow or a name's mere
echo

Suffices those who miss the name and
thing !

You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,
To keep in proof how near her breath
you came.

Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—
Ask for me that way—(oh, you under-
stand)

You'd find the same gift yielded with
a grace,

Which, if you make the least show to
extort . . .

—You'll see ! and when you have
ruined both of us,

Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude !

Nor. Then, if I turn it that way, you
consent ?

'Tis not my way ; I have more hope in
truth :

Still, if you won't have truth—why, this
indeed,

Were scarcely false, as I'd express the
sense.

Will you remain here ?

Con. O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you ! then, you take
my way ?

Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for
me,

Paint plain my poor conceit and make
it serve ?

I owe that withered woman everything—
Life, fortune, you, remember ! Take my
part—

Help me to pay her ! Stand upon your
rights ?

You, with my rose, my hands, my heart
on you ?

Your rights are mine—you have no
rights but mine.

Nor. Remain here. How you know
me !

Con. Ah, but still—

[*He breaks from her : she remains.*
Dance-music from within.

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Constance !—She is here as he
said. Speak ! quick !

Is it so ? is it true—or false ? One word !

Con. True.

Queen. Mercifullest Mother,
thanks to thee !

Con. Madam !

Queen. I love you, Constance,
from my soul.

Now say once more, with any words you
will,

'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.

Con. Why should you doubt it ?

Queen. Ah,
why doubt ? why doubt ?

Dear, make me see it ! Do you see it so ?
None see themselves ; another sees
them best.

You say ' why doubt it ? '—you see him
and me.

It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith—wherein we
fail—

Whate'er we yearn for would be granted
us ;

Howbeit we let our whims prescribe
despair,

Our very fancies thwart and cramp our
will,

And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves.
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
And of being loved, as truly as you
palm

The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. Heaven !

Queen. But it was so, Constance,
it was so !

Men say—or do men say it ? fancies
say—

‘Stop here, your life is set, you are
grown old.

Too late—no love for you, too late for
love—

Leave love to girls. Be queen : let
Constance love !’

One takes the hint—half meets it like
a child,

Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
‘Oh, love, true, never think of love
again !

I am a queen : I rule, not love, indeed.’
So it goes on ; so a face grows like
this,

Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as
these,

Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank
God !

Con. I cannot understand—
Queen. The happier you !

Constance, I know not how it is with
men :

For women, (I am a woman now like
you)

There is no good of life but love—but
love !

What else looks good, is some shade
flung from love—

Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be
warned by me,

Never you cheat yourself one instant !
Love,

Give love, ask only love, and leave the
rest !

O Constance, how I love you !
Con. I love you.

Queen. I do believe that all is come
through you.

I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed
dead in me ;

I thought your fresh youth warmed my
withered heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not ?
Not so ! it is true and it shall be true !

Con. Tell it me : let me judge if true
or false.

Queen. Ah, but I fear you ! you will
look at me

And say ‘she’s old, she’s grown un-
lovely quite

Who ne’er was beauteous : men want
beauty still.’

Well, so I feared—the curse ! so I felt
sure.

Con. Be calm. And now you feel not
sure, you say ?

Queen. Constance, he came,—the
coming was not strange—

Do not I stand and see men come and
go ?

I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—‘one young man
the more !

He will love some one,—that is nought
to me :

What would he with my marble state-
liness ?’

Yet this seemed somewhat worse than
heretofore ;

The man more gracious, youthful, like
a god,

And I still older, with less flesh to
change—

We two those dear extremes that long
to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first
began

Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
The old way for the old end—interest.

Oh, to live with a thousand beating
hearts

Around you, swift eyes, serviceable
hands,

Professing they’ve no care but for your
cause,

Thought but to help you, love but for
yourself,

And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred to
life,

Yet leave for the first breathing
woman’s cheek,

First dancer’s, gipsy’s, or street bala-
dine’s !

Why, how I have ground my teeth to
hear men’s speech

Stifed for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should
startle me,

Their eyes declined, such quicquid to
respect,

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,
Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.

There have been moments, if the sentinel

Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,

I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

Con. Who could have comprehended?

Queen. Ay, who—who?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.

Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps

It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

Con. I wait to tell it.

Queen. Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year

Exceeds in value all was ever done,
You know—it is not I who say it—all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)

I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work

Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—

It must have finer aims to lure it on !
I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.

And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,

I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

Con. Me, madam ?

Queen. It did seem to me, your face
Met him where'er he looked : and whom but you

Was such a man to love? it seemed to me,

You saw he loved you, and approved the love,

And so you both were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in the garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung

And forced to understand. It seemed so true,

So right, so beautiful, so like you both,
That all this work should have been done by him

Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose, some night like this—

Borne on to claim his due reward of me,
He might say, ' Give her hand and pay me so.'

And I (O Constance, you shall love me now !)

I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
—' And he shall have it. I will make her blest,

My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,

My happiest woman's self that might have been !

These two shall have their joy and leave me here.'

Yes—yes—

Con. Thanks !

Queen. And the word was on my lips

When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear

A mere calm statement of his just desire
For payment of his labour. When—O Heaven,

How can I tell you ? cloud was on my eyes

And thunder in my ears at that first word

Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—

He loved me—from the first step to the last,

Loved me !

Con. You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke

Of love ? what if you should mistake ?

Queen. No, no—
No mistake ! Ha, there shall be no mistake !

He had not dared to hint the love he felt—

You were my reflex—(how I understood !)

He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,

And love, love was the end of every phrase.

Love is begun—this much is come to pass,

The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours—

I will learn, I will place my life on you,
But teach me how to keep what I have won.

Am I so old ? this hair was early grey ;
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,

And joy will bring the cheek's red back,
I feel.

I could sing once too ; that was in my youth.

Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,

Beautiful—for the last French painter did !

I know they flatter somewhat ; you are frank—

I trust you. How I loved you from the first !

Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out

And set her by their side to take the eye :

I must have felt that good would come from you.

I am not generous—like him—like you !
But he is not your lover after all—

It was not you he looked at. Saw you him ?

You have not been mistaking words or looks !

He said you were the reflex of myself—
And yet he is not such a paragon

To you, to younger women who may choose

Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth !

You know you never named his name to me—

You know, I cannot give him up—ah—God,

Not up now, even to you !

Con. Then calm yourself.

Queen. See, I am old—look here, you happy girl,

I will not play the fool, deceive myself ;
'Tis all gone—put your cheek beside

my cheek—

Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold !

But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am I not left,

My soul, myself ? All women love great men

If young or old—it is in all the tales—
Young beauties love old poets who can

love—

Why should not he, the poems in my soul,

The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,

The constancy ? I throw them at his feet.

Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,

And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows

all around ?

You could not praise indeed the empty conch ;

But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.

How I will love him ! cannot men love love ?

Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf ? ah, women can

do that !

Well, but men too ; at least, they tell you so.

They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they

please ;

And yet the best of them confide to friends

That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—

They spend a day with such and tire the next ;

They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,

Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,
Horrible though it be—that prejudice,

Prescription . . . curses ! they will love a queen.

They will—they do. And will not, does not—he ?

Con. How can he ? You are wedded—'tis a name

We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,

His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled

As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all ?

Queen. Hear her ! there, there now—
could she love like me ?

What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace ?

See all it does or could do ! so, youth loves !

Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do

What I will—you, it was not born in ! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the moon.

I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,

His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

Con. You will do—dare do . . . pause
on what you say !

Queen. Hear her ! I thank you,
Sweet, for that surprise.

You have the fair face : for the soul,
see mine !

I have the strong soul : let me teach you, here.

I think I have borne enough and long enough,

And patiently enough, the world remarks,

To have my own way now, unblamed by all.

It does so happen (I rejoice for it)
This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.

There's not a better way of settling claims

Than this ; God sends the accident express :

And were it for my subjects' good, no more,

'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,

Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost fear

To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate !

How strong I am ! could Norbert see me now !

Con. Let me consider. It is all too strange.

Queen. You, Constance, learn of me ;
do you, like me !

You are young, beautiful : my own, best girl,

You will have many lovers, and love one—

Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,

And taller than he is, for yourself are tall.

Love him, like me ! give all away to him ;

Think never of yourself ; throw by your pride,

Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,

And love him simply for his very self.
Remember, I (and what am I to you ?)

Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,

Do all but just unlove him ! He loves me.

Con. He shall.

Queen. You, step inside my inmost heart.

Give me your own heart : let us have one heart.

I'll come to you for counsel ; ' this he says,

This he does ; what should this amount to, pray ?

Beseech you, change it into current coin.

Is that worth kisses ? shall I please him there ?

And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else ?

Your love, according to your beauty's worth,

For you shall have some noble love, all gold :

Whom choose you ? we will get him at your choice.

—Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,

I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours :

Now, I would face the world with my new life,

With my new crown. I'll walk around
the rooms,
And then come back and tell you how
it feels.
How soon a smile of God can change
the world !
How we are made for happiness—how
work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight !
True, I have lost so many years. What
then ?
Many remain : God has been very good.
You, stay here. 'Tis as different from
dreams,
From the mind's cold calm estimate of
bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and
blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind,
God's moon !
*[She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE.
Dance-music from within.]*

NORBERT enters.

Nor. Well ! we have but one minute
and one word.

Con. I am yours, Norbert !

Nor. Yes, mine.

Con. Not till now !

You were mine. Now I give myself to
you.

Nor. Constance !

Con. Your own ! I know
the thriftier way

Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were
all,

With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed,
preserve

Exhaustless till the end my part and
yours,

My giving and your taking ; both our
joys

Dying together. Is it the wiser way ?
I choose the simpler ; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade
upon !

Use it, abuse it,—anything but think
Hereafter, 'Had I known she loved me so,
And what my means, I might have
thriven with it.'

This is your means. I give you all my-
self.

Nor. I take you and thank God.

Con. Look on through years !
We cannot kiss, a second day like this ;
Else were this earth, no earth.

Nor. With this day's heat
We shall go on through years of cold.

Con. So, best !
I try to see those years—I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth comes ;
you look back

And lay all to the first glow—not sit
down

For ever brooding on a day like this
While seeing the embers whiten and
love die.

Yes, love lives best in its effect ; and
mine,

Full in its own life, yearns to live in
yours.

Nor. Just so. I take and know you
all at once.

Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you ; give me
time,

Let me be proud and think you shall
know me.

My soul is slower : in a life I roll
The minute out whereto you condense
yours—

The whole slow circle round you I must
move,

To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its
worth.

'Tis the sparks' long succession one by
one

Shall show you, in the end, what fire
was crammed

In that mere stone you struck : how
could you know,

If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies ? your own
warmth would hide

Its coldness, were it cold.

Con. But how prove, how ?

Nor. Prove in my life, you ask ?

Con. Quick, Norbert—how ?

Nor. That's easy told. I count life
just a stuff

To try the soul's strength on, educe the
man.

Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.

As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows
strength alike,

So I will seize and use all means to
prove

And show this soul of mine you crown
as yours,

And justify us both.

Con. Could you write books,
Paint pictures! one sits down in
poverty

And writes or paints, with pity for the
rich.

Nor. And loves one's painting and
one's writing, then,

And not one's mistress! All is best,
believe,

And we best as no other than we are.

We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand
aloof

To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take
your face

And write of it and paint it—to what
end?

For whom? what pale dictatress in the
air

Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like
form

With earth's real blood and breath, the
beauteous life

She makes despised for ever? You are
mine,

Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my
art,

The cold calm power to see how fair you
look.

I come to you—I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens
there

Paint us.

Con. So, best!

Nor. I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathize with
life,

With action, power, success. This way
is straight;

And days were short beside, to let me
change

The craft my childhood learnt: my
craft shall serve.

Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives, and force the
fruit

First for themselves, and afterward for
me

In the due tithe; the task of some one
man,

By ways of work appointed by them-
selves.

I am not bid create—they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—

But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.

What if it see, too, my first outbreak
here

Amid the warmth, surprise and sym-
pathy,

And instincts of the heart that teach
the head?

What if the people have discerned at
length

The dawn of the next nature, the new
man

Whose will they venture in the place of
theirs,

And who, they trust, shall find them out
new ways

To heights as new which yet he only
sees?

I felt it when you kissed me. See this
Queen,

This People—in our phrase, this mass of
men—

See how the mass lies passive to my
hand

And how my hand is plastic, and you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end

Shall crown this issue as this crowns the
first!

My will be on this People! then, the
strain,

The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the suc-
cess

And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shaped to the curl of the
god's lip,

While rounded fair for lower men to see
The Graces in a dance all recognize

With turbulent applause and laughs of
heart!

So triumph ever shall renew itself ;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begin . . .

Con. I ever helping ?

Nor. Thus !

[*As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.*

Con. Hist, madam—so I have performed my part.

You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert ? a little slow in seeing it !
Begin, to end the sooner. What's a kiss ?

Nor. Constance !

Con. Why, must I teach it you again ?

You want a witness to your dullness, sir ?

What was I saying these ten minutes long ?

Then I repeat—when some young handsome man

Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,
So very far beyond him, as he says—
So hopelessly in love, that but to speak
Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,

And makes some insignificant good soul
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant
And a very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not face—
When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand ?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,

—May I not say so, madam ?—tops his hope,

And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of her
The confidant who brought the same about—

Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,

I do hold that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse.

Dismiss it with a 'There, enough of you !'
Forget it, show his back unmannerly ;
But like a liberal heart will rather turn
And say, 'A tingling time of hope was ours—

Betwixt the fears and falterings—we two lived

A chanceful time in waiting for the prize :

The confidant, the Constance, served not ill !

And though I shall forget her in due time,

Her use being answered now, as reason bids,

Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,

Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,

The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,

And the first—which is the last—rewarding kiss.'

Nor. Constance ? it is a dream—ah see, you smile !

Con. So, now his part being properly performed,

Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly ; I do justice in my turn.

Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well ;

He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I
Whom served to prove your soul accessible.
Led his thoughts on, drew them to their place

When else they had wandered out into despair,

And kept love constant towards its natural aim.

Enough, my part is played ; you stoop half-way

And meet us royally and spare our fears :

'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.

Take him—with my full heart ! my work is praised

By what comes of it. Be you happy, both !

Yourself—the only one on earth who can—

Do all for him, much more than a mere heart

Which though warm is not useful in its warmth

As the silk vesture of a queen ! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—

For him,—he knows his own part.

Nor. Have you done ?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?

Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,

Or did you but accept it? Well—at least

You lose by it.

Con. Nay, madam, 'tis your turn! Restrain him still from speech a little more,

And make him happier and more confident!

Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!

Mark, Norbert! do not shrink now!

Here I yield

My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!

With her go put in practice the great schemes

You teem with, follow the career else closed—

Be all you cannot be except by her!

Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake

Anything—frankly say you love him! Else

He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in

His fear than you conceive: I know the man.

Nor. I know the woman somewhat, and confess

I thought she had jested better: she begins

To overcharge her part. I gravely wait Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?

Queen. Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognize

Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit, Eccentric speech and variable mirth, Not very perhaps and somewhat bold,

Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)

—May still be right: I may do well to speak

And make authentic what appears a dream

To even myself. For, what she says, is true—

Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now of love,

Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me, But justified a warmth felt long before Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say:

Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said.

Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak

To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' toil—

But still I had not waited to discern

Your heart so long, believe me. From the first

The source of so much zeal was almost plain,

In absence even of your own words just now

Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very strange,

But takes a happy ending—in your love Which mine meets: be it so: as you choose me,

So I choose you.

Nor. And worthily you choose!

I will not be unworthy your esteem, No, madam. I do love you; I will meet

Your nature, now I know it. This was well.

I see,—you dare and you are justified: But none had ventured such experiment,

Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,

Less confident of finding such in me.

I joy that thus you test me ere you grant The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best

Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself. So—back again into my part's set words—

Devotion to the uttermost is yours, But no, you cannot, madam, even you,

Create in me the love our Constance does. Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—

Not you magnolia-bell superb with scent Invites a certain insect—that's myself—

But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.

I take this lady.

Con. Stay—not hers, the trap— Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all.

He is too cunning, madam! It was I,

I, Norbert, who . . .

Nor. You, was it, Constance ? Then,
But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I might not pardon
here.
I am the Queen's : she only knows my
brain—

She may experiment therefore on my
heart
And I instruct her too by the result.
But you, Sweet, you who know me, who
so long
Have told my heart-beats over, held my
life

In those white hands of yours,—it is
not well !

Con. Tush ! I have said it, did I not
say it all ?

The life, for her—the heart-beats, for
her sake !

Nor. Enough ! my cheek grows red,
I think. Your test ?

There's not the meanest woman in the
world,

Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove
itself,

I dared insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,

'Take back the soul you offer—I keep
mine'

But—'Take the soul still quivering on
your hand,

The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some playful
friend,

For—what's the trifle he requites me
with ?'

I tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it suc-
cumb ?

No ! fearing God and standing 'neath
His heaven,

I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the
world,

And he, I cared to please, ten emperors !

Con. Norbert !

Nor. I love once as I live
but once.

What case is this to think or talk about ?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all

Should such a step as this kill love in me ?
Your part were done : account to God
for it.

But mine—could murdered love get up
again,

And kneel to whom you pleased to
designate,

And make you mirth ? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance ? now
you know

That body and soul have each one life,
but one :

And here's my love, here, living, at
your feet.

Con. See the Queen ! Norbert—this
one more last word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—
thus

Loved me in earnest . . .

Nor. Ah, no jest holds here !
Where is the laughter in which jests
break up,

And what this horror that grows
palpable ?

Madam—why grasp you thus the bal-
cony ?

Have I done ill ? Have I not spoken the
truth ?

How could I other ? Was it not your test,
To try me, and what my love for Con-
stance meant ?

Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus ! so
one takes

A beggar—asks him what would buy
his child,

And then approves the expected laugh
of scorn

Returned as something noble from the
rags.

Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar ! Ha,
what's this ?

You two glare each at each like panthers
now.

Constance, the world fades ; only you
stand there !

You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of
things,

Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price ?
No—no—'tis easy to believe in you.

Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice ? well,
still—

Though I should curse, I love you. I
 am love
 And cannot change: love's self is at
 your feet. [*The QUEEN goes out.*]
Con. Feel my heart; let it die
 against your own!
Nor. Against my own! explain not;
 let this be.
 This is life's height.
Con. Yours! Yours! Yours!
Nor. You and I—
 Why care by what meanders we are here
 In the centre of the labyrinth? men
 have died
 Trying to find this place, which we have
Con. Found, found!
Nor. Sweet, never fear
 what she can do!

We are past harm now.
Con. On the breast of God.
 I thought of men—as if you were a man.
 Tempting him with a crown!
Nor. This must end here—
 It is too perfect!
Con. There's the music stopped.
 What measured heavy tread? it is one
 blazo
 About me and within me.
Nor. Oh, some death
 Will run its sudden finger round this
 spark
 And sever us from the rest—
Con. And so do well.
 Now the doors open—
Nor. 'Tis the guard comes.
Con. Kiss!

STRAFFORD

A TRAGEDY

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY

April 23, 1837.

PERSONS.

CHARLES I.
 Earl of HOLLAND.
 Lord SAVILE.
 Sir HENRY VANE.
 WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH,
 Earl of STRAFFORD.
 JOHN PYM.
 JOHN HAMPDEN.
 The younger VANE.
 DENZIL HOLLIS.
 BENJAMIN RUDYARD.

NATHANIEL FIENNES.
 Earl of LOUDON.
 MAXWELL, Usher of the Black Rod.
 BALFOUR, Constable of the Tower.
 A Puritan.
 Queen HENRIETTA.
 LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.
 Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners,
 Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries,
 Officers of the Court, &c. Two of
 Strafford's Children.

ACT I

SCENE I. *A House near Whitehall.*—
 HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, the younger
 VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES, and
 many of the Presbyterian Party:
 LOUDON and other Scots Commis-
 sioners.

Vane. I say, if he be here—
 Rud. (And he is here!)

Hol. For England's sake let every
 man be still
 Nor speak of him, so much as say his
 name,
 Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry
 Vane!
 One rash conclusion may decide our
 course
 And with it England's fate—think—
 England's fate!

Hampden, for England's sake they should be still !

Vane. You say so, Hollis ? Well, I must be still !

It is indeed too bitter that one man, Any one man's mere presence should suspend

England's combined endeavour : little need

To name him !

Rud. For you are his brother, Hollis !

Hamp. Shame on you, Rudyard ! time to tell him that,

When he forgets the Mother of us all.

Rud. Do I forget her ?

Hamp. You talk idle hate Against her foe : is that so strange a thing ?

Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs ?

A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went :

But David—five smooth pebbles from the brook

Within his scrip . . .

Rud. Be you as still as David !

Fien. Here 's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue

Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments ;

Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us !

Rud. Let 's hope for news of them now he returns—

He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought !

—But I'll abide Pym's coming.

Vane. Now, by Heaven

They may be cool who can, silent who will—

Some have a gift that way ! Wentworth is here,

Here, and the King 's safe closeted with him

Ere this. And when I think on all that 's past

Since that man left us, how his single arm Rolled the advancing good of England back

And set the woeful Past-up in its place,—

Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be—

How that man has made firm the fickle King

(Hampden, I will speak out !)—in aught he feared

To venture on before ; taught Tyranny Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,

To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close

That strangled agony bleeds mute to death—

How he turns Ireland to a private stage For training infant Villanies, new ways

Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,

Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark

To try how much man's nature can endure —If he dies under it, what harm ? if not,

Why, one more trick is added to the rest Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears

England may learn to bear : how all this while

That man has set himself to one dear task,

The bringing Charles to relish more and more

Power, power without law, power and blood too—

—Can I be still ?

Hamp. For that you should be still.

Vane. Oh, Hampden, then and now ! The year he left us,

The People in full Parliament could wrest

The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King ;

And now, he'll find in an obscure small room

A stately gathering of great-hearted men That take up England's cause : England is here !

Hamp. And who despairs of England ?

Rud. That do I,

If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick

To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,

The muckworm Cottington, the maniaic Laud,

May yet be longed-for back again. I say, I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this—

Which all true men say after me, not loud

But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer !
This King, who treads our England underfoot,

Has just so much—it may be fear or craft—

As bids him pause at each fresh outrage ; friends,

He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own,

Some voice to ask, ' Why shrink ?—am I not by ? '

Now, one whom England loved for serving her,

Found in his heart to say, ' I know where best

The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans

Upon me when you trample.' Witness, you !

So Wentworth heartened Charles, and England fell.

But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane ! 'Tis well said, Vane !

Vane. —Who has not so forgotten Runnymede !—

Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane ! Go on !

Vane. There are some little signs of late she knows

The ground no place for her ! She glances round,

Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way

On other service : what if she arise ?

No ! the King beckons, and beside him stands

The same bad man once more, with the same smile

And the same gesture. Now shall England crouch,

Or catch at us and rise ?

Voices. The Renegade !

Haman ! Ahithophel !

Hamp. Gentlemen of the North,

It was not thus, the night your claims were urged,

And we pronounced the League and Covenant

The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well !

Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.

Vane. Hampden !

Fien. Stay, Vane !

Lou. Be just and patient, Vane !

Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon ! you

Have still a Parliament, and this your League

To back it ; you are free in Scotland still :

While we are brothers, hope's for England yet.

But know you wherefore Wentworth comes ? to quench

This last of hopes ? that he brings war with him ?

Know you the man's self ? what he dares ?

Lou. We know, All know—'tis nothing new.

Vane. And what's new, then, In calling for his life ? Why, Pym himself—

You must have heard—ere Wentworth dropped our cause

He would see Pym first ; there were many more

Strong on the people's side and friends of his,

Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here,

But for these Wentworth cared not ; only, Pym

He would see—Pym and he were sworn, 'tis said,

To live and die together ; so, they met At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are

sure, was long, Specious enough, the devil's argument

Lost nothing on his lips ; he'd have Pym own

A patriot could not play a purer part Than follow in his track ; they two combined

Might put down England. Well, Pym heard him out ;

One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all :

' You leave us, Wentworth ! while your head is on,

I'll not leave you.'

Hamp. Has he left Wentworth, then?

Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,

Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?

Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.

Hamp. Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as
Vane says,

Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!

Vane. No, no!

Silent I can be: not indifferent!

Hamp. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare

His anger, cast not England quite away
In this her visitation!

A Puritan. Seven years long
The Midianite drove Israel into dens
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty
man,

Pym enters.

Even Gideon!

Pym. Wentworth's come: nor sickness, care,

The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that
beat his ship,

Could keep him from the King. He has
not reached

Whitehall: they've hurried up a Council
there

To lose po time and find him work
enough.

Where's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament...

Loa. Holds firm:

We were about to read reports.

Pym. The King

Has just dissolved your Parliament.

Lou. and other Scots. Great God!

An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England,
then!

Pym. The King's too sanguine;
doubtless Wentworth's here;

But still some little form might be
kept up.

Hamp. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard,
you had much to say!

Hol. The rumour's false, then...

Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him
back: I know

'Tis the King calls him: Wentworth
supersedes

The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there's talk

enough, by this,—

Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is
now

To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
That, chronicling a nation's great

despair,

Tells they were long rebellious, and their
lord

Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned

in peace.

Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page

Shall run, the King thinks, 'Wentworth
thrust it down

At the sword's point.'

A Puritan. I'll do your bidding,
Pym,

England's and God's—one blow!

Pym. A goodly thing—

We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England! Heaven grows
dark above:

Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder
fall,

To say how well the English spirit comes
out

Beneath it! All have done their best,
indeed,

From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least

one here,

When she is saved (for her redemption
dawns,

Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it
dawns)

Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great
Men?

We would not—no, we would not give
that up!

Hamp. And one name shall be dearer
than all names.

When children, yet unborn, are taught
that name

After their fathers',—taught what
matchless man . . .

Pym. . . . Saved England ? What if
Wentworth's should be still

That name ?

Rud. and others. We have just said it,
Pym ! His death

Saves her ! We said it—there 's no way
beside !

I'll do God's bidding, Pym ! They struck
down Joab

And purged the land.

Vane. No villanous striking-down !

Rud. No, a calm vengeance : let the
whole land rise

And shout for it. No Feltons !

Pym. . . . Rudyard, no !

England rejects all Feltons ; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say
the trust again

Of England in her servants—but I'll
think

You know me, all of you. Then, I
believe,

Spite of the Past, Wentworth rejoins
you, friends !

Vane and others. Wentworth ? apos-
tate ! Judas ! double-dyed

A traitor ! Is it Pym, indeed . . .

Pym. . . . Who says

Vane never knew that Wentworth,
loved that man,

Was used to stroll with him, arm locked
in arm,

Along the streets to see the people pass
And read in every island-countenance

Fresh argument for God against the
King,—

Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with
noble thoughts,

(You've joined us, Hampden—Hollis,
you as well,)

And then left talking over Gracchus'
death . . .

Vane. To frame, we know it well, the
choicest clause

In the Petition of Right : he framed
such clause

One month before he took at the King's
hand

His Northern Presidency, which that
Bill

Denounced.

Pym. Too true ! Never more, never
more

Walked we together ! Most alone I went.
I have had friends—all here are fast my

friends—

But I shall never quite forget that friend.
And yet it could not but be real in him !

You, Vane,—you Rudyard, have no
right to trust

To Wentworth : but can no one hope
with me ?

Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed
English blood

Like water ?

Hamp. Ireland is Aceldama.

Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a
hunting-ground

To please the King, now that he knows
the King ?

The People or the King ? and that King,
Charles !

Hamp. Pym, all here know you :
you'll not set your heart

On any baseless dream. But say one
deed

Of Wentworth's, since he left us . . .

Vane. [Shouting without]
There ! he comes,

And they shout for him ! Wentworth's
at Whitehall,

The King embracing him, now, as we
speak,

And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon him-
self,

Now, while you tell us here how changed
he is !

Hear you ?

Pym. And yet if 'tis a dream, no
more,

That Wentworth chose their side, and
brought the King

To love it as though Laud had loved it
first,

And the Queen after ;—that he led their
cause

Calm to success, and kept it spotless
through,

So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls and close content

That violence, which something mars
even right

Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace

From its serene regard. Only a dream!

Hamp. We meet here to accomplish certain good

By obvious means, and keep tradition up

Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
In this poor chamber: nor without effect

Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,

As, listening to the beats of England's heart,

We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply

By these her delegates. Remains alone

That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall—

But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?

Looked we or no that tyranny should turn

Her engines of oppression to their use? Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here—

Shall we break off the tactics which succeeded

In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place?

Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,

And keep the old arms at their steady play?

Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read the list!

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid

In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence . . .

(*shouting.*)

Vane. I, in England's name,
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,

Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.

We English had free leave to think; till now,

We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all's changed: they change the first,

They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .

Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no act

Serves England!

Voices. Vane for England!

Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

LADY CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

Went. And the King?

Lady Car. Wentworth, lean on me! sit then,—

I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.

Went. No; or—Lucy, just your arm;

I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:

After that, rest. The King?

Lady Car. Confides in you.

Went. Why? or, why now?—They have kind throats, the knaves!

Shout for me—they!

Lady Car. You come so strangely soon:

Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—

Did they shout for you?

Went. Wherefore should they not? Does the King take such measures for himself?

Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,

You say!

Lady Car. I said but few dared carp at you.

Went. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I!

He's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds

In Ireland? I am yet his instrument

Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!

Lady Car. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,

To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Went. All the Court ! Evermore the Court about us !

Savile and *Holland*, *Hamilton* and *Vane* About us,—then the King will grant me —what ?

That he for once put these aside and say—

‘Tell me your whole mind, *Wentworth* !’

Lady Car. You professed You would be calm.

Went. Lucy, and I am calm ! How else shall I do all I come to do, Broken, as you may see, body and mind,

How shall I serve the King ? time wastes meanwhile,

You have not told me half. His foot-step ! No.

Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—

Why does the King distrust me ?

Lady Car. He does not Distrust you.

Went. Lucy, you can help me ; you Have even seemed to care for me : one word !

Is it the Queen ?

Lady Car. No, not the Queen : the party

That poisons the Queen’s ear, *Savile* and *Holland*.

Went. I know, I know : and *Vane*, too, he’s one too ?

Go on—and he’s made Secretary. Well ? Or leave them out and go straight to the charge ;

The charge !

Lady Car. Oh, there’s no charge, no precise charge ;

Only they sneer, make light of—one may say,

Nibble at what you do.

Went. I know ! but Lucy, I reckoned on you from the first !—Go on !

—Was sure could I once see this gentle friend

When I arrived, she’d throw an hour away

To help her . . . what am I ?

Lady Car. You thought of me, *Dear Wentworth* ?

Went. But go on ! The party here !

Lady Car. They do not think your Irish Government

Of that surpassing value . . .

Went. The one thing Of value ! The one service that the crown May count on ! All that keeps these very *Vanes*

In power, to vex me—not that they do vex,

Only it might vex some to hear that service

Decried, the sole support that’s left the King !

Lady Car. So the Archbishop says.

Went. Ah ? well, perhaps The only hand held up in my defence May be old *Laud*’s ! These *Hollands*, then, these *Saviles*

Nibble ? They nibble ?—that’s the very word !

Lady Car. Your profit in the Customs, *Bristol* says, Exceeds the due proportion : while the tax . . .

Went. Enough ! ’tis too unworthy,—I am not

So patient as I thought ! What’s *Pym* about ?

Lady Car. *Pym* ?

Went. *Pym* and the People.

Lady Car. Oh, the Faction ! Extinct—of no account : there’ll never be

Another Parliament.

Went. Tell *Savile* that ! You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here

Never forget !) that in my earliest life I was not . . . much that I am now ! The King

May take my word on points concerning *Pym*

Before Lord *Savile*’s, Lucy, or if not, I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me, These *Vanes* and *Hollands* ! I’ll not be their tool

Who might be *Pym*’s friend yet.

But there’s the King !

Where is he ?

Lady Car. Just apprised that you arrive.

Went. And why not here to meet me ? I was told

He sent for me, nay, longed for me !

Lady Car. Because,—
He is now . . . I think a Council 's sitting
now

About this Scots affair.

Went. A Council sits ?
They have not taken a decided course
Without me in the matter ?

Lady Car. I should say . . .
Went. The war ? They cannot have
agreed to that ?

Not the Scots' war ?—without con-
sulting me—

Me, that am here to show how rash
it is,

How easy to dispense with ?—Ah, you
too

Against me ! well,—the King may take
his time.

—Forget it, Lucy ! cares make peevish :
mine

Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.
Lady Car. For life or death I am your
own, dear friend ! [*Goes out.*

Went. Heartless ! but all are heart-
less here. Go now,

Forsake the People !—I did not for-
sake

The People : they shall know it—when
the King

Will trust me !—who trusts all beside at
once,

While I have not spoke Vane and Savile
fair,

And am not trusted : have but saved
the Throne :

Have not picked up the Queen's glove
prettily,

And am not trusted. But he'll see me
now.

Weston is dead : the Queen's half
English now—

More English : one decisive word will
brush

These insects from . . . the step I know
so well !

The King ! But now, to tell him . . . no
—to ask

What's in me he distrusts :—or, best
begin

By proving that this frightful Scots
affair

Is just what I foretold. So much to say.

And the flesh fails, now ! and the time is
come,

And one false step no way to be repaired !
You were avenged, Pym, could you look
on me !

Pym enters.

Went. I little thought of you just
then.

Pym. No ? I
Think always of you, Wentworth.

Went. The old voice !
I wait the King, sir.

Pym. True—you look so pale !
A Council sits within ; when that
breaks up

He'll see you.

Went. Sir, I thank you.

Pym. Oh, thank Laud !
You know when Laud once gets on
Church affairs

The case is desperate : he'll not be long
To-day : he only means to prove, to-day,

We English all are mad to have a hand
In butchering the Scots for serving

God
After their fathers' fashion : only that !

Went. Sir, keep your jests for those
who relish them !

(Does he enjoy their confidence ?) 'Tis
kind

To tell me what the Council does.

Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on
war

Before you came ? no need : you shall
have all

The credit, trust me.

Went. Have the Council dared—
They have not dared . . . that is—I know
you not.

Farewell, sir : times are changed.

Pym. —Since we two met
At Greenwich ? Yes : poor patriots
though we be,

You cut a figure, makes some slight
return

For your exploits in Ireland ! Changed
indeed,

Could our friend Eliot look from out his
grave !

Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaint-
tance's sake,

Just to decide a question ; have you,
now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us ?

Went. Sir !

Pym. Spare me the gesture ! you
misapprehend !

Think not I mean the advantage is with
me.

I was about to say that, for my part,
I never quite held up my head since
then,—

Was quite myself since then : for first,
you see,

I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our
side.

Forgive me : Savile, old Vane, Holland
here,

Eschew plain-speaking : 'tis a trick
I keep.

Went. How, when, where, Savile,
Vane and Holland speak,

Plainly or otherwise, would have my
scorn,

All of my scorn, sir . . .

Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts
Claim somewhat ?

Went. Keep your thoughts !
believe the King

Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these
Vanes

And Saviles ! make your mind up, o'
God's love,

That I am discontented with the King !

Pym. Why, you may be : I should
be, that I know,

Were I like you.

Went. Like me ?

Pym. I care not much

For titles : our friend Eliot died no
Lord,

Hampden's no Lord, and Savile is a
Lord :

But you care, since you sold your soul
for one.

I can't think, therefore, your soul's
purchaser

Did well to laugh you to such utter
scorn

When you twice prayed so humbly for
its price,

The thirty silver pieces . . . I should say,

The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the
movingest !

Console yourself : I've borne him prayers
just now

From Scotland not to be oppressed by
Laud,

Words moving in their way : he'll pay,
be sure,

As much attention as to those you sent.
Went. False, sir !—Who showed them

you ? suppose it so,
The King did very well . . . nay, I was

glad

When it was shown me : I refused, the
first !

John Pym, you were my friend—for-
bear me once !

Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother
of my soul,

That all should come to this !
Went. Leave me !

Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you ?

Went. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this !

Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach—now sad with doubt

and fear,
Because I hope in you—yes, Wentworth,

you
Who never mean to ruin England—you

Who shake off, with God's help, an ob-
scene dream

In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself—

your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's

Chief,
And Hampden's friend !

This is the proudest day !
Come Wentworth ! Do not even see the

King !
The rough old room will seem itself

again !
We'll both go in together : you've not

seen
Hampden so long : come : and there's

Fiennes : you'll have
To know young Vane. This is the

proudest day !
[The King enters. WENTWORTH

lets fall PYM's hand.

Cha. Arrived, my Lord?—This gentleman, we know,
Was your old friend.

The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.

[*Pym goes out.*]

You have made haste, my Lord.

Went. Sir, I am come . . .

Cha. To see an old familiar—nay, 'tis well ;

Aid us with his experience : this Scots' League

And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs

That they intrigue with France : the Faction, too,

Whereof your friend there is the head and front,

Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.

Went. Sir, trust me ! but for this once, trust me, sir !

Cha. What can you mean ?

Went. That you should trust me, sir !

Oh—not for my sake ! but 'tis sad, so sad

That for distrusting me, you suffer—you Whom I would die to serve : sir, do you think

That I would die to serve you ?

Cha. But rise, Wentworth !

Went. What shall convince you ?

What does Savile do

To prove him . . . Ah, one can't tear out one's heart

And show it, how sincere a thing it is !

Cha. Have I not trusted you ?

Went. Say aught but that !

There is my comfort, mark you : all will be

So different when you trust me—as you shall !

It has not been your fault,—I was away, Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know ?

I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—

All will go on so well !

Cha. Be sure I do—

I've heard that I should trust you : as you came,

Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .

Went. No,—hear nothing—

Be told nothing about me ! you're not told

Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you !

Cha. You love me, Wentworth : rise !

Went. I can speak now.

I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I Can save you ; only I. Sir, what must be ?

Cha. Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)

—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

Went. That is, he'll have a war : what's done is done !

Cha. They have intrigued with France ; that's clear to Laud.

Went. Has Laud suggested any way to meet

The war's expense ?

Cha. He'd not decide so far Until you joined us.

Went. Most considerate ! He's certain they intrigue with

France, these Scots ?

The People would be with us.

Cha. Pym should know.

Went. The People for us—were the People for us !

Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust :

Summon a Parliament ! in Ireland first, Then, here.

Cha. In truth ?

Went. That saves us ! that puts off

The war, gives time to right their grievances—

To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, as

Laud styles it, tutors Scotland : all their plans

Suppose no Parliament : in calling one You take them by surprise. Produce

the proofs Of Scotland's treason ; then bid England help :

Even Pym will not refuse.

Cha. You would begin With Ireland ?

Went. Take no care for that : that's sure

To prosper.

Cha. You shall rule me. You were best

Return at once : but take this ere you go !

Now, do I trust you ? You're an Earl : my Friend

Of Friends : yes, while . . . You hear me not !

Went. Say it all o'er again—but once again :

The first was for the music—once again !

Cha. Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,

Vain rumours. Henceforth touching Strafford is

To touch the apple of my sight : why gaze so earnestly ?

Went. I am grown young again, And foolish. What was it we spoke of ?

Cha. Ireland, The Parliament,—

Went. I may go when I will ?—Now ?

Cha. Are you tired so soon of us ?

Went. My King ! But you will not so utterly abhor A Parliament ? I'd serve you any way.

Cha. You said just now this was the only way.

Went. Sir, I will serve you !

Cha. Strafford, spare yourself—You are so sick, they tell me.

Went. 'Tis my soul That's well and prospers, now !

This Parliament—We'll summon it, the English one—I'll care

For everything. You shall not need them much.

Cha. If they prove restive . . .

Went. I shall be with you.

Cha. Ere they assemble ?

Went. I will come, or else Deposit this infirm humanity

I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King !

[As WENTWORTH goes out, the QUEEN enters.

Cha. That man must love me !

Queen. Is it over then ?

Why, he looks yellower than ever ! well, At least we shall not hear eternally Of service—services : he's paid at least,

Cha. Not done with : he engages to surpass

All yet performed in Ireland.

Queen. I had thought Nothing beyond was ever to be done.

The war, Charles—will he raise supplies enough ?

Cha. We've hit on an expedient ; he . . . that is,

I have advised . . . we have decided on The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.

Queen. O truly ! You agree to that ? Is that

The first fruit of his counsel ? But I guessed

As much.

Cha. This is too idle, Henriette !

I should know best. He will strain every nerve,

And once a precedent established . . .

Queen. Notice How sure he is of a long term of favours ! He'll see the next, and the next after that ;

No end to Parliaments !

Cha. Well, it is done. He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,

The Commons here . . .

Queen. Here ! you will summon them

Here ? Would I were in France again to see

A King !

Cha. But Henriette . . .

Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear ! Why should they bear your rule ?

Cha. But listen, Sweet !

Queen. Let Wentworth listen—you confide in him !

Cha. I do not, Love—I do not so confide !

The Parliament shall never trouble us . . . Nay, hear me ! I have schemes, such schemes : we'll buy

The leaders off : without that, Wentworth's counsel

Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it

To have excuse for breaking it for ever, And whose will then the blame be ? See you not ?

Come, Dearest!—look! the little fairy,
now,
That cannot reach my shoulder!
Dearest, come!

ACT II

SCENE I.—(As in Act I, Scene I.)

The same Party enters.

Rud. Twelve subsidies!

Vane. O Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!

Rud. True: Strafford called the
Parliament—
'Tis he should laugh!

A Puritan. Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.

Fien. —A stinging one,
If that's the Parliament: twelve sub-
sidies!

A stinging one! but, brother, where's
your word

For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots'
war?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery
flying serpent.

Fien. Shall be? It chips the shell,
man; peeps abroad.

Twelve subsidies!—Why, how now,
Vane?

Rud. Peace, Fiennes!

Fien. Ah?—But he was not more a
dupe than I,

Or you, or any here, the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look
up, friend Vane!

We all believed that Strafford meant us
well

In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN enters.

Vane. Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep
again;

I'd look the People in the face again:
Clear me from having, from the first,
hoped, dreamed

Better of Strafford!

Hamp. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Henry
Vane!

Rud. Meantime, by flashes I make
shift to see

Strafford revived our Parliaments;
before,

War was but talked of; there's an
army, now:

Still, we've a Parliament! Poor Ireland
bears

Another wrench (she dies the hardest
death!)

Why, speak of it in Parliament! and,
lo,

'Tis spoken! so console yourselves.

Fien. The jest!
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to
win

The privilege of laying on our backs
A sorer burden than the King dares lay!

Rud. Mark now: we meet at length,
complaints pour in

From every county, all the land cries
out

On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star-chamber;

we lend
An ear. 'Ay, lend them all the ears you
have!'

Puts in the King; 'my subjects, as you
find,

Are fretful, and conceive great things of
you.

Just listen to them, friends; you'll
sanction me

The measures they most wince at, make
them yours,

Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,
They say my levies pinch them,—raise
me straight

me straight
Twelve subsidies!'

Fien. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies!

Hol. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland—what has he to do with
that?

How could he speak his mind? He left
before

The Parliament assembled. Pym, who
knows

Strafford . . .

Rud. Would I were sure we know
ourselves!

What is for good, what, bad—who
friend, who foe!

Hol. Do you count Parliaments no
gain?

Rud. A gain ?
While the King's creatures overbalance
us ?

—There's going on, beside, among our-
selves

A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville's
gone.

I'll put a case ; had not the Court de-
clared

That no sum short of just twelve sub-
sidies

Will be accepted by the King—our
House,

I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money !

Hol. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .

Rud. Will grant them ! Hamp-
den, do you hear ?

Congratulate with me ! the King's the
king,

And gains his point at last—our own
assent

To that detested tax ! all's over, then !
There's no more taking refuge in this
room,

Protesting, ' Let the King do what he
will,

We, England, are no party to our
shame :

Our day will come ! ' Congratulate with
me !

Pym enters.

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this
Parliament, you say,
But we'll not have our Parliaments like
those

In Ireland, Pym !

Rud. Let him stand forth,
your friend !

One doubtful act hides far too many
sins ;

It can be stretched no more, and, to my
mind,

Begins to drop from those it covered.

Other Voices. Good !
Let him avow himself ! No fitter time !

We wait thus long for you.

Rud. Perhaps, too long !

Since nothing but the madness of the
Court,

In thus unmasking its designs at once,
Has saved us from betraying England.

Stay—
This Parliament is Strafford's : let us
vote

Our list of grievances too black by far
To suffer talk of subsidies : or best,
That ship-money's disposed of long ago
By England : any vote that's broad
enough :

And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
Support his Parliament !

Vane. And vote as well
No war's to be with Scotland ! Hear
you, Pym ?

We'll vote, no war ! No part nor lot in it
For England !

Many Voices. Vote, no war ! Stop
the new levies !

No Bishop's war ! At once ! When next
we meet !

Pym. Much more when next we meet !
Friends, which of you

Since first the course of Strafford was in
doubt,

Has fallen the most away in soul from
me ?

Vane. I sat apart, even now, under
God's eye,

Pondering the words that should de-
nounce you, Pym,

In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy.

Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my
hand

And say you pardon me for all the pain
Till now ! Strafford is wholly ours.

Many Voices. Sure ? sure ?

Pym. Most sure : for Charles dis-
solves the Parliament

While I speak here.

—And I must speak, friends, now !
Strafford is ours. The King detects the
change,

Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
His ancient path : no Parliament for us,
No Strafford for the King !

Come, all of you,
To bid the King farewell, predict success
To his Scots' expedition, and receive

Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be

Indeed a Parliament !

Vane. Forgive me, Pym !

Voices. This looks like truth : **Strafford** can have, indeed,

No choice.

Pym. Friends, follow me ! He's with the King.

Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane !

This is no sullen day for England, sirs ! **Strafford** shall tell you !

Voices. To Whitehall then ! Come !

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

CHARLES AND STRAFFORD.

Cha. **Strafford** !

Straf. Is it a dream ? my papers, here—

Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found

So happy—(look ! the track you pressed my hand

For pointing out)—and in this very room,

Over these very plans, you tell me, sir, With the same face, too,—tell me just one thing

That ruins them ! How's this ? What may this mean ?

Sir, who has done this ?

Cha. **Strafford**, who but I ?

You bade me put the rest away : indeed You are alone.

Straf. Alone, and like to be !

No fear, when some unworthy scheme's grown ripe,

Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose

The mischief on the world ! Laud hatches war,

Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,

And I'm alone.

Cha. At least, you knew as much When first you undertook the war.

Straf. My liege, Was this the way ? I said, since Laud would lap

A little blood, 'twere best to hurry over

The loathsome business, not to be whole months

At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,

Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both

I'd lead an Irish army to the West, While in the South an English . . . but you look

As though you had not told me fifty times

'Twas a brave plan ! My army is all raised,

I am prepared to join it . . .

Cha. Hear me, **Strafford** !

Straf. . . . When, for some little thing, my whole design

Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper ?)

I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead The English army : why ? Northumberland

That I appointed, chooses to be sick—Is frightened : and, meanwhile, who answers for

The Irish Parliament ? or army, either ? Is this my plan ?

Cha. So disrespectful, sir ?

Straf. My liege, do not believe it ! I am yours,

Yours ever : 'tis too late to think about : To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step

Shall pass for mine ; the world shall think it mine.

But, here ! But, here ! I am so seldom here,

Seldom with you, my King ! I, soon to rush

Alone upon a giant in the dark !

Cha. My **Strafford** !

Straf. [*examines papers awhile.*]

'Seize the passes of the Tyne' !

But, sir, you see—see all I say is true ? My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause

To ask the Parliament for help ; whereas We need them frightfully.

Cha. Need the Parliament ?

Straf. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more !

We can afford no error ; we draw, now, Upon our last resource : the Parliament

Must help us !

Cha. I've undone you, Strafford !
Straf. Nay—
 Nay—why despond, sir ? 'tis not come to that !

I have not hurt you ? Sir, what have I said

To hurt you ? I unsay it ! Don't despond !

Sir, do you turn from me ?

Cha. My friend of friends !

Straf. We'll make a shift ! Leave me the Parliament !

Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make

Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.

They're sitting, that's one great thing ; that half gives

Their sanction to us ; that's much : don't despond !

Why, let them keep their money, at the worst !

The reputation of the People's help is all we want : we'll make shift yet !

Cha. Good Strafford !

Straf. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small

They offer, we'll accept it : any sum—For the look of it : the least grant tells the Scots

The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally

Turned ours : that told, there's half the blow to strike !

What will the grant be ? What does Glanville think ?

Cha. Alas !

Straf. My liege ?

Cha. Strafford !

Straf. But answer me !

Have they . . . O surely not refused us half ?

Half the twelve subsidies ? We never looked

For all of them ! How many do they give ?

Cha. You have not heard . . .

Straf. (What

has he done ?)—Heard what ?

But speak at once, sir, this grows terrible !
[The King continuing silent.]

You have dissolved them !—I'll not leave this man.

Cha. 'Twas old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.

Straf. Old Vane ?

Cha. He told them, just about to vote the half,

That nothing short of all twelve subsidies

Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Straf. Vane !

Vane ! Who, sir, promised me that very Vane . . .

O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,

The one last hope—I that despair, my hope—

That I should reach his heart one day, and cure

All bitterness one day, be proud again

And young again, care for the sunshine too,

And never think of Eliot any more,—God, and to toil for this, go far for this,

Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart

And find Vane there !

[Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness.]

Northumberland is sick

Well then, I take the army : Wilmot leads

The Horse, and he with Conway must secure

The passes of the Tyne : Ormond supplies

My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City :

If they refuse a loan—debase the coin And seize the bullion ! we've no other choice.

Herbert . . .

And this while I am here !

with you !

And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane ! I go,

And, I once gone, they'll close around you, sir,

When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure

To ruin me—and you along with me ! Do you see that ? And you along with me !

—Sir, you'll not ever listen to these men, And I away, fighting your battle ? Sir,

If they—if She—charge me, no matter how—

Say you, 'At any time when he returns His head is mine!' Don't stop me there! You know

My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Cha. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,

And . . .

Straf. I! I! that was never spoken with

Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!

That say it is the maddest, wickedest. . . Do you know, sir, I think, within my heart,

That you would say I did advise the war;

And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,

These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,

You will not step between the raging People

And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first I knew it! Never was so cold a heart! Remember that I said it—that I never Believed you for a moment!

—And, you loved me? You thought your perfidy profoundly hid

Because I could not share the whisperings With Vane? With Savile? What, the face was masked?

I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh, But heart of stone—of smooth, cold, frightful stone!

Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots

Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym—

Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think

I'll leave them in the dark about it all? They shall not know you? Hampden,

Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, &c. enter.

[*Dropping on his knee.*] Thus favoured with your gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against

Your servant, utterly and ever yours? So, gentlemen, the King's not even left The privilege of bidding me farewell Who haste to save the People—that you style

Your People—from the mercies of the Scots

And France their friend?

[*To CHARLES.*] Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed

Upon you, sir!

Your pleasure, gentlemen?

Hamp. The King dissolved us—'tis the King we seek

And not Lord Strafford.

Straf. —Strafford, guilty too Of counselling the measure. [*To*

CHARLES.] (Hush . . . you know— You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)

A heinous matter, truly! But the King Will yet see cause to thank me for a course

Which now, perchance . . . (Sir, tell them so!)—he blames.

Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:

I shall be with the Scots, you understand?

Then yelp at me!

Meanwhile, your Majesty Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust . . .

[*Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD conducts CHARLES to the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the King disappears, they turn as by one impulse to PYM, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.*

Hamp. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!

Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come out of this unworthy place

To our old room again! He's gone.

[*STRAFFORD, just about to follow the King, looks back.*

Pym. Not gone!

[*To STRAFFORD.*] Keep tryst! the old appointment's made anew:

Forget not we shall meet again!

Straf. So be it !
And if an army follows me ?

Vane. His friends
Will entertain your army !

Pym. I'll not say
You have misreckoned, Strafford : time
shows. Perish,

Body and spirit ! Fool to feign a doubt,
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess should achieve
the feat !

What share have I in it ? Shall I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder
there ?

Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one
of you !

[*PYM, HAMPDEN, &c. go out.*]

Straf. Pym, we shall meet again !

LADY CARLISLE enters.

You here, child ?
Lady Car. Hush—
I know it all : hush, 'Strafford !

Straf. Ah ? you know ?
Well. I shall make a sorry soldier,
Lucy !

All knights begin their enterprise, we
read,

Under the best of auspices ; 'tis morn,
The Lady girds his sword upon the
Youth

(He 's always very young)—the trumpets
sound,

Cups pledge him, and, why, the King
blesses him—

You need not turn a page of the
Romance

To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate.
Indeed.

We've the fair Lady here ; but she
apart,—

A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not the Giant's friends.

All 's one :

Let us go forth !

Lady Car. Go forth ?

Straf. What matters it ?
We shall die gloriously—as the book
says.

Lady Car. To Scotland ? not to Scot-
land ?

Straf. Am I sick
Like your good brother, brave North-
umberland ?

Beside, these walls seem falling on me.

Lady Car. Strafford,
The wind that saps these walls can under-
mine

Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence
creeps the wind ?

Have you no eyes except for Pym ?
Look here !

A breed of silken creatures lurk and
thrive

In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym ?
Old Vane

Can vanquish you ! And Vane you think
to fly ?

Rush on the Scots ! Do nobly ! Vane's
slight sneer

Shall test success, adjust the praise,
suggest

The faint result : Vane's sneer shall
reach you there.

—You do not listen !

Straf. Oh,—I give that up ;
There 's fate in it : I give all here quite
up.

Care not what old Vane does or Holland
does

Against me ! 'Tis so idle to withstand—
In no case tell me what they do !

Lady Car. But Strafford . . .

Straf. I want a little strife, beside ;
real strife ;

This petty, palace-warfare does me
harm :

I shall feel better, fairly out of it.

Lady Car. Why do you smile ?

Straf. I got to fear them, child !
I could have torn his throat at first, old

Vane's,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way

To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses
heart !

I often found it in my heart to say

'Do not traduce me to her !'

Lady Car. But the King . . .

Straf. The King stood there, 'tis not
so long ago,

—There ; and the whisper, Lucy, 'Be
my friend

Offriends !—My King ! I would have . . .

Lady Car. . . . Died for him ?

Straf. Sworn him true, Lucy : I can die for him.

Lady Car. But go not, Strafford !
But you must renounce
This project on the Scots ! Die ! wherefore die ?

Charles never loved you.

Straf. And he never will.
He 's not of those who care the more for men

That they're unfortunate.

Lady Car. 'Then wherefore die
For such a master ?

Straf. You that told me first
How good he was—when I must leave true friends

To find a truer friend !—that drew me here

From Ireland,—'I had but to show myself

And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest '—

You, child, to ask me this ?

Lady Car. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles !)

Then, friend,
I shall not see you any more !

Straf. Yes, Lucy.
There 's one man here I have to meet.

Lady Car. (The King !
What way to save him from the King ?

My soul—
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise

That clothes the King—he shall behold my soul !)

Strafford,—I shall speak best if you'll not gaze

Upon me : I had never thought, indeed, To speak, but you would perish, too !
So sure !

Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my friend,

One image stamped within you, turning blank

The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—

A weakness, but most precious,—like, a flaw

I' the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face

Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there

Lest Nature lose her gracious thought for ever !

Straf. When could it be ? no ! Yet . . . was it the day

We waited in the anteroom, till Holland Should leave the presence-chamber ?

Lady Car. What ?
Straf. —That I

Described to you my love for Charles ?
Lady Car. (Ah, no—

One must not lure him from a love like that !

Oh ; let him love the King and die ! 'Tis past.

I shall not serve him worse for that one brief

And passionate hope, silent forever now !)

And you are really bound for Scotland, then ?

I wish you well : you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew

Will not be idle—setting Vane aside !

Straf. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym.

Lady Car. What need, since there 's your King to take your part ?

He may endure Vane's counsel ; but for Pym—

Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .

Straf. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's !

Lady Car. Is that to ask
A curl of me ?

Straf. Scotland—the weary way !
Lady Car. Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford ?

Straf. [showing the George.] He hung
it there : twine yours around it, child !

Lady Car. No—no—another time—I trifle so !

And there 's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court

Is dull ; do something to enliven us
In Scotland : we expect it at your hands.

Straf. I shall not fall in Scotland.
Lady Car. Prosper—if

You'll think of me sometimes !

Straf. How think of him
And not of you ? of you, the lingering streak

(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

Lady Car. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its last streak

The night has its first star. [*She goes out.*

Straf. That voice of hers—

You'd think she had a heart sometimes!

His voice

Is soft too.

Only God can save him now.

Be Thou about his bed, about his path!

His path! Where's England's path?

Diverging wide

And not to join again the track my foot

Must follow—whither? All that forlorn

way

Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . .

What, they do

Then join again, these paths? For, huge

in the dusk,

There's—Pym to face!

Why then, I have a foe

To close with, and a fight to fight at last

Worthy my soul! What, do they beard

the King,

And shall the King want Strafford at his

need?

Am I not here? Not in the market-

place,

Pressed on by the rough artisans, so

proud

To catch a glance from Wentworth!

They'll lie down

Hungry and smile 'Why, it must end

some day—

Is he not watching for our sake?'

—Not there!

But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,

The . . .

Curse nothing to-night! Only

one name

They'll curse in all those streets to-

night. Whose fault?

Did I make kings? set up, the first, a

man

To represent the multitude, receive

All love in right of them—supplant

them so,

Until you love the man and not the

king—

The man with the mild voice and mourn-

ful eyes

Which send me forth.

—To breast the bloody sea

That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.

Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall.*

SIR HENRY VANE, LORD SAVILE, LORD HOLLAND, and others of the Court.

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out!

Savile. And what kept you from sharing their civility?

Sir H. Vane. Kept me? Fresh news from Scotland, sir! worse than the last.

If that may be! All's up with Strafford there:

Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither

Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!

Well now, before they thrust you out,—go on,—

Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthall say

All we set down for him?

Hol. Not a word missed.

Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I

And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed

A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.

But such a gang of graceless ruffians,

Vane,

As glared at us!

Vane. So many?

Savile. Not a bench

Without its complement of burly knaves;

Your hopeful son among them: Hamp-

den leant

Upon his shoulder—think of that!

Vane. I'd think

On Lenthall's speech, if I could get at it.

Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should

prove

For this unlooked-for summons from

the King?

Hol. Just as we drilled him.

Vane. That the Scots will march

On London?

Hol. All, and made so much of it, A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure

To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well ?

Hol. 'Tis a strange thing now !
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast, unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking ! Savile, help
me out :

What was it all ?

Sav. Something about
' a matter '—

No,—' a work for England.'

Hol. ' England's great revenge '
He talked of.

Sav. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves ?

Hol. However that may be,
'Twas something with which we had
nought to do,
For we were 'strangers' and 'twas
' England's work '—

(All this while looking us straight in the
face)

In other words, our presence might be
spared.

So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled
us out,

Locked the doors after us, and here are
we.

Vane. Eliot's old method . . .

Sav. Prithec, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great
Duke,

And how to manage Parliaments !
'Twas you

Advised the Queen to summon this :
why, Strafford

(To do him justice) would not hear of it.

Vane. Say, rather, you have done the
best of turns

To Strafford : he's at York, we all
know why.

I would you had not set the Scots on
Strafford

Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my
lord !

Sav. Was it I altered Strafford's
plans ? did I . . .

A Messenger enters.

Mes. The Queen, my lords—she sends
me : follow me

At once ; 'tis very urgent ! she requires
Your counsel : something perilous and
strange

Occasions her command.

Sav. We follow, friend !
Now, Vane ;—your Parliament will
plague us all !

Vane. No Strafford here beside !

Sav. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .

Hol. Nay, find a fitter time for
quarrels—Pym

Will overmatch the best of you ; and,
think,

The Queen !

Vane. Come on, then : understand,
I loathe

Strafford as much as any—but his use !
To keep off Pym—to screen a friend or
two !

I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II.—Whitehall.

The QUEEN and LADY CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.

Lady Car. It is so.

Queen. Why, the House

Have hardly met.

Lady Car. They met for that.

Queen. No, no !
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford ? 'Tis
a jest.

Lady Car. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider ! 'Tis the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which
nothing

But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They'll
wreak all

Their spite on us, no doubt ; but the
old way

Is to begin by talk of grievances :

They have their grievances to busy them.

Lady Car. Pym has begun his speech.

Queen. Where's Vane ?—That is,
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he
leaves

His Presidency ; he's at York, we know,
Since the Scots beat him : why should
he leave York ?

Lady Car. Because the King sent for
him.

Queen. Ah—but if
The King did send for him, he let him
know
We had been forced to call a Parliament—
A step which Strafford, now I come to
think,
Was vehement against.

Lady Car. The policy
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments
To earth, then setting them upon their
feet

And giving them a sword: but this is idle.
Did the King send for Strafford? He
will come.

Queen. And what am I to do?

Lady Car. What do? Fail, madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters
how,

So it but stand on record that you made
An effort, only one?

Queen. The King's away
At Theobalds.

Lady Car. Send for him at once: he
must
Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds
the truth
Of the report: then . . .

Lady Car. —It will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that
lends his arm,
And breaks his heart for you!

SIR H. VANE enters.

Vane. The Commons, madam,
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge
debate,
No lack of noise; but nothing, I should
guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has cer-
tainly
Not spoken yet.

Queen. [To LADY CARLISLE.] You
hear?

Lady Car. I do not hear
That the King's sent for!

Sir H. Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

HOLLAND enters.

Queen. The last news, Holland?

Hol. Pym

Is raging like a fire. The whole House
means

To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Straf-
ford.

Queen. Strafford?

Hol. If they content themselves with
Strafford! Laud

Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank
too,

Pym has not left out one of them—I
would

You heard Pym raging!

Queen. Vane, go find the King!
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow
Pym

To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE enters.

Savile. Not to Whitehall—
'Tis to the Lords they go: they'll seek
redress

On Strafford from his peers—the legal
way,

They call it.

Queen. (Wait, Vane!)

Sav. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford
can save

Himself so readily: at York, remember,
In his own county, what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten
him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not
come.

Queen. Lucy, he will not come!

Lady Car. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.

Vane. Oh, doubtless!
And bring destruction with him; that's
his way.

What but his coming spoilt all Conway's
plan?

The King must take his counsel, choose
his friends,

Be wholly ruled by him! What's the
result?

The North that was to rise, Ireland to
help,—

What came of it? In my poor mind, a
fright

Is no prodigious punishment.

Lady Car. A fright?

Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks

To frighten him. [To the QUEEN.] You will not save him, then?

Sav. When something like a charge is made, the King

Will best know how to save him: and 'tis clear,

While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,

The King may reap advantage: this in question,

No dunning you with ship-money complaints!

Queen. [To LADY CARLISLE.] If we dissolve them, who will pay the army?

Protect us from the insolent Scots?

Lady Car. In truth

I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns

Me little: you desired to learn what course

Would save him: I obey you.

Vane. Notice, too,

There can't be fairer ground for taking full

Revenge — (Strafford's revengeful) — than he'll have

Against his old friend Pym.

Queen. Why, he shall claim

Vengeance on Pym!

Vane. And Strafford, who is he

To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents That harass all beside? I, for my part,

Should look for something of discomfiture

Had the King trusted me so thoroughly And been so paid for it.

Hol. He'll keep at York:

All will blow over: he'll return no worse,

Humbled a little, thankful for a place Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dis-

pendence

With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD enters.

Queen. You here!

Straff. The King sends for me, madam.

Queen. Sir,

The King...

Straff. An urgent matter that imports the King.

[To LADY CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now

That all this muttering and shrugging, see,

Begins at me? They do not speak!

Car. 'Tis welcome!

For we are proud of you—happy and proud

To have you with us, Strafford! you were staunch

At Durham: you did well there! Had you not

Been stayed, you might have... we said, even now,

Our hope's in you!

Sir H. Vane. [To LADY CARLISLE.]

The Queen would speak with you.

Straff. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe

To signify my presence to the King?

Sav. An urgent matter?

Straff. None that touches you,

Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous,

Sly, pitiful intriguing with the Scots—You would go free, at least! (They half

divine

My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?

The service I would render, much concerns

His welfare.

Queen. But his Majesty, my lord,

May not be here, may...

Straff. Its importance, then,

Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,

And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.

Queen. [Who has been conversing with VANE and HOLLAND.] The King

will see you, sir.

[To LADY CARLISLE.] Mark me: Pym's worst

Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,

Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.

Let us not seem instructed! We should work

No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves

With shame in the world's eye. [To STRAFFORD.] His Majesty

Has much to say with you.

Straf. Time fleeting, too !
[To LADY CARLISLE.] No means of getting them away ? And She—

What does she whisper ? Does she know my purpose ?

What does she think of it ? Get them away !

Queen. [To LADY CARLISLE] He comes to baffle Pym—he thinks the danger

Far off : tell him no word of it ! a time For help will come ; we'll not be wanting then.

Keep him in play, Lucy—you, self-possessed

And calm ! [To STRAFFORD] To spare your Lordship some delay

I will myself acquaint the King. [To LADY CARLISLE.] Beware !

[The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, and SAVILE, go out.]

Straf. She knows it ?

Lady Car. Tell me, Strafford !

Straf. Afterward !

This moment's the great moment of all time.

She knows my purpose ?

Lady Car. Thoroughly : just now She bade me hide it from you.

Straf. Quick, dear child, The whole o' the scheme ?

Lady Car. (Ah, he would learn if they Connive at Pym's procedure ! Could they but

Have once apprised the King ! But there's no time

For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.

Straf. Known and approved ?

Lady Car. Hardly discountenanced.

Straf. And the King—say, the King consents as well ?

Lady Car. The King's not yet informed, but will not dare

To interpose.

Straf. What need to wait him, then ? He'll sanction it ! I stayed, child, tell him, long

It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here.

You know him, there's no counting on the King.

Tell him I waited long !

Lady Car. (What can he mean ? Rejoice at the King's hollowness ?)

Straf. I knew They would be glad of it,—all over once, I knew they would be glad : but he'd contrive,

The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it, An angel's making.

Lady Car. (Is he mad ?) Dear Strafford,

You were not wont to look so happy. *Straf.* Sweet,

I tried obedience thoroughly. I took The King's wild plan : of course, ere I could reach

My army, Conway ruined it. I drew The wrecks together, raised all heaven

and earth, And would have fought the Scots : the King at once

Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,

God put it in my mind to love, serve, die For Charles, but never to obey him

more ! While he endured their insolence at Ripon

I fell on them at Durham. But you'll tell

The King I waited ? All the anteroom Is filled with my adherents.

Lady Car. Strafford—Strafford, What daring act is this you hint ?

Straf. No, no ! 'Tis here, not daring if you knew ! all here !

[*Drawing papers from his breast.* Full proof, see, ample proof—does the Queen know

I have such damning proof ? Bedford and Essex,

Broke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile ?

The simper that I spoilt ?), Saye, Mandeville—

Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym !

Lady Car. Great heaven !

Straf. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
 And his losels, crushed !—Pym shall not ward the blow
 Nor Savile creep aside from it ! The Crew
 And the Cabal—I crush them !
Lady Car. And you go—
Strafford,—and now you go ?—
Straf. —About no work
 In the background, I promise you ! I go
 Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
 Mainwaring !
Lady Car. Stay—stay, *Strafford* !
Straf. She'll return,
 The Queen—some little project of her own !
 No time to lose : the King takes fright perhaps.
Lady Car. Pym's strong, remember !
Straf. Very strong, as fits
 The Faction's head—with no offence to Hampden,
 Vane, Rudyard, and my loving Hollis—one
 And all they lodge within the Tower to-night
 In just equality. Bryan ! Mainwaring !
[Many of his Adherents enter.]
 The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
 On the Scots' war ; my visit's opportune.
 When all is over, Bryan, you'll proceed
 To Ireland : these dispatches, mark me,
 Bryan,
 Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond :
 We want the army here—my army, 'raised
 At such a cost, that should have done such good,
 And was inactive all the time ! no matter,
 We'll find a use for it. Willis . . . or, no—You !
 You, friend, make haste to York : bear this, at once . . .
 Or,—better stay for form's sake—see yourself
 The news you carry. You remain with me
 To execute the Parliament's command,

Mainwaring ! help to seize the lesser knaves ;
 Take care there's no escaping at back-doors :
 I'll not have one escape, mind me—not one !
 I seem revengeful, Lucy ? Did you know
 What these men dare !
Lady Car. It is so much they dare !
Straf. I proved that long ago ; my turn is now !
 Keep sharp watch, Goring, on the citizens ;
 Observe who harbours any of the brood
 That scramble off : be sure they smart for it !
 Our coffers are but lean.
 And you, child, too,
 Shall have your task ; deliver this to Laud.
 Laud will not be the slowest in my praise :
 'Thorough' he'll say !—Foolish, to be so glad !
 This life is gay and glowing, after all :
 'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
 Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
 Is worth the living for.
Lady Car. That reddening brow !
 You seem . . .
Straf. Well—do I not ? I would
 'be well—
 I could not but be well on such a day !
 And, this day ended, 'tis of slight import
 How long the ravaged frame subjects the soul
 In *Strafford*.
Lady Car. Noble *Strafford* !
Straf. No farewell !
 I'll see you anon, to-morrow—the first thing.
 —If She should come to stay me !
Lady Car. Go—'tis nothing—
 Only my heart that swells : it has been thus
 Ere now : go, *Strafford* !
Straf. To-night, then, let it be.
 I must see Him : you, the next after Him. *

I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!

You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour

To talk of all your lives. Close after me! 'My friend of friends!'

[STRAFFORD and the rest go out.

Lady Car. The King—ever the King! No thought of one beside, whose little word

Unveils the King to him—one word from me,

Which yet I do not breathe!

Ah, have I spared Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward

Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way

He is the better for my love. No, no—He would not look so joyous—I'll believe

His very eye would never sparkle thus,

Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III.—*The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents of STRAFFORD, &c.

A Group of Presbyterians.—1. I tell you he struck Maxwell: Maxwell sought

To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed on.

2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance

Before these rufflers.

3. Strafford here the first, With the great army at his back!

4. No doubt. I would Pym had made haste: that's Bryan, hush—

The gallant pointing.

Strafford's Followers.—1. Mark these worthies, now!

2. A goodly gathering! 'Where the carcass is

There shall the eagles'—what's the rest?

3. For eagles

Say crows. ♣

A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs! *One of Strafford's Followers.* Are we in Geneva?

A Presbyterian. No—nor in Ireland; we have leave to breathe.

One of Strafford's Followers. Truly? Behold how privileged we be

To serve 'King Pym'! There's Some-one at Whitehall

Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts...

The Presbyterian. Nearer.

A Follower of Strafford. Higher, We look to see him. [*To his Companions.*]

I'm to have St. John In charge; was he among the knaves just now

That followed Pym within there?

Another. The gaunt man

Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect

Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL enters.

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's Maxwell—

Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock around

The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet

Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

Max. Gentlemen,

Stand back! A great thing passes here.

A Follower of Strafford. [*To another.*]

The Earl

Is at his work! [*To M.*] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Speak out! [*To a Presbyterian.*] Friend, I've a kindness for you! Friend,

I've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!

Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind

St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,

Not laugh?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Another.

Nay, wait:

The jest will be to wait.

First. And who's to bear

These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they came...

Came... just as we come!

- [A Puritan enters hastily and without observing STRAFFORD'S Followers.
The Puritan. How goes on the work ?
 Has Pym . . .
A Follower of Strafford. The secret's out at last. Aha,
 The carrion's scented ! Welcome, crow the first !
 Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye !
 ' King Pym has fallen ! '
The Puritan. Pym ?
A Strafford. Pym !
A Presbyterian. Only Pym ?
Many of Strafford's Followers. No, brother, not Pym only ; Vane as well,
 Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well !
A Presbyterian. My mind misgives : can it be true ?
Another. Lost ! Lost !
A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell ?
The Puritan. Pride before destruction,
 A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.
Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now ! The very thing ! A word in season !
 A golden apple in a silver picture,
 To greet Pym as he passes !
 [The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.
Max. Stand back, all !
Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym ! And I !
Strafford's Followers. Now for the text !
 He comes ! Quick !
The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased !
 The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked !
 The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
 That ruled the nations in his anger—he is persecuted and none hindereth !
 [The doors open, and STRAFFORD issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of ' Void the House.'
- Straf.* Impeach me ! Pym ! I never struck, I think,
 The felon on that calm insulting mouth
 When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . . God !
 Was it a word, only a word that held
 The outrageous blood back on my heart
 —which beats !
 Which beats ! Some one word—
 ' Traitor,' did he say,
 Bending that eye, brimfull of bitter fire,
 Upon me ?
Max. In the Commons' name, their servant
 Demands Lord Strafford's sword.
Straf. What did you say ?
Max. The Commons bid me ask your Lordship's sword.
Straf. Let us go forth : follow me, gentlemen !
 Draw your swords too : cut any down that bar us.
 On the King's service ! Maxwell, clear the way !
 [The Presbyterians prepare to dispute his passage.
Straf. I stay : the King himself shall see me here.
 Your tablets, fellow !
 [To MAINWARING.] Give that to the King !
 Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be !
 Nay, you shall take my sword !
 [MAXWELL advances to take it.
 Or, no—not that !
 Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all this far,
 All up to that—not that ! Why, friend, you see,
 When the King lays your head beneath my foot
 It will not pay for that. Go, all of you !
Max. I dare, my lord, to disobey : none stir !
Straf. This gentle Maxwell !—Do not touch him, Bryan !
 [To the Presbyterians.] Whichever our of you will carry this
 Escapes his fellows' fate. None saves his life ?

None ?

[*Cries from within of 'STRAFFORD.'*
Slingsby, I've loved you at least :
make haste !

Stab me ! I haven't time to tell you why.
You then, my Bryan ! Mainwaring, you
then !

Is it because I spoke so hastily
At Allerton ? The King had vexed me.
[*To the Presbyterians.*] You !

—Not even you ? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads, you
know !

But what if I can't live this minute
through ?

Pym, who is there with his pursuing
smile !

[*Louder cries of 'STRAFFORD.'*

The King ! I troubled him, stood in the
way

Of his negotiations, was the one
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
Of Scotland : and he sent for me, from
York,

My safety guaranteed—having prepared
A Parliament—I see ! And at Whitehall
The Queen was whispering with Vane—

I see
The trap ! [*Tearing off the George.*

I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One
stroke, now !

[*His own adherents disarm him.*

Renewed cries of 'STRAFFORD.'
England ! I see Thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now—Pym awaits me—pray
you now !

[*STRAFFORD reaches the doors :
they open wide. HAMPDEN and
a crowd discovered, and, at the bar,
Pym standing apart. As STRAFF-
FORD kneels, the scene shuts.*

ACT IV

SCENE I.—Whitehall.

The KING, the QUEEN, HOLLIS, LADY
CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND,
SAVILLE, in the background.)

Lady Car. Answer them, Hollis, for
his sake ! One word !

Cha. [*To HOLLIS.*] You stand, silent
and cold, as though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my play-
fellow

Of other times. What wonder after all ?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hol. Sir,
It is yourself that you deceive, not me.
You'll quit me comforted, your mind
made up

That, since you've talked thus much
and grieved thus much,
All you can do for Strafford has been
done.

Queen. If you kill Strafford—(come,
we grant you leave,

Suppose)—
Hol. I may withdraw, sir ?

Lady Car. Hear them out !
'Tis the last chance for Strafford ! Hear
them out !

Hol. 'If we kill Strafford'—on the
eighteenth day

Of Strafford's trial—'We !'
Cha. Pym, my good Hollis—

Pym, I should say !
Hol. Ah, true—sir, pardon me !

You witness our proceedings every day ;
But the screened gallery, I might have
guessed,

Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,
Pym takes up all the room, shuts out
the view.

Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the
place

Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
—That's England ; Ireland sends, and
Scotland too,

Their representatives ; the Peers that
judge

Are easily distinguished ; one remarks
The People here and there : but the
close curtain

Must hide so much !
Queen. Acquaint your insolent

crew,
This day the curtain shall be dashed
aside !

It served a purpose.
Hol. Think ! This very day ?

Ere Strafford rises to defend himself ?
Cha. I will defend him, sir !—sanc-
tion the Past

This day : it ever was my purpose.
Rage

At me, not Strafford !

Lady Car. Nobly !—will he not
Do nobly ?

Hol. Sir, you will do honestly ;
And, for that deed, I too would be a
king.

Cha. Only, to do this now !—‘ deaf ’
(in your style)
‘ To subjects’ prayers,’—I must oppose
them now.

It seems their will the Trial should
proceed,—

So palpably their will !

Hol. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for
that.

Strafford, your prime support, the sole
roof-tree

That props this quaking House of Privi-
lege,

(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the
treacherous sand !)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an
arm

Could save him, you’d save Strafford.

Cha. And they mean
Calmly to consummate this wrong !

No hope ?

This ineffaceable wrong ! No pity then ?

Hol. No plague in store for perfidy ?
—Farewell !

You called me, sir—[*To LADY CARLISLE*]
you, lady, bade me come

To save the Earl : I came, thank God
for it,

To learn how far such perfidy can go !

You, sir, concert with me on saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford !

Cha. I ?—and how ?

Hol. Eighteen days long he throws,
one after one,

Pym’s charges back : a blind moth-
eaten law !

—He’ll break from it at last : and
whom to thank ?

The mouse that gnawed the lion’s net
for him

Got a good friend,—but he, the other
mouse,

That looked on while the lion freed him-
self—

Fared he so well, does any fable say ?

Cha. What can you mean ?

Hol. Pym never could have proved
Strafford’s design of bringing up the
troops

To force this kingdom to obedience :
Vane—

Your servant, not our friend, has proved
it.

Cha. Vane ?

Hol. This day. Did Vane deliver up
or no

Those notes which, furnished by his son
to Pym,

Seal Strafford’s fate ?

Cha. Sir, as I live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done ! What
treason next ?

I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the
truth !

Ask Vane himself !

Hol. I will not speak to Vane,
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every
day.

Queen. Speak to Vane’s master then !
What gain to him

Were Strafford’s death ?

Hol. Ha ? Strafford cannot turn
As you, sir, sit there—bid you forth,
demand

If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission ?—Whether you con-
trived

Or no, that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways—your own,
his part

To counteract the King’s kind impulses—
While . . . but you know what he could
say ! And then

He might produce,—mark, sir,—a cer-
tain charge

To set the King’s express command
aside,

If need were, and be blameless ! He
might add . . .

Cha. Enough !

Hol. —Who bade him break
the Parliament,
Find some pretext for setting up sword-
law !

Queen. Retire !

Cha. Once more, whatever
Vane dared do,
I know not : he is rash, a fool—I know
Nothing of Vane !

Hol. Well—I believe you. Sir,
Believe me, in return, that . . .

[*Turning to LADY CARLISLE.*] Gentle
lady,

The few words I would say, the stones
might hear

Sooner than these,—I rather speak to
you,

You, with the heart! The question,
trust me, takes

Another shape, to-day: not, if the King
Or England shall succumb,—but, who
shall pay

The forfeit, Strafford or his master.
Sir,

You loved me once: think on my
warning now!

Cha. On you and on your warning
both!—*Carlisle!*

That paper!

Queen. But consider!

Cha. Give it me!
There, signed—will that content you?
Do not speak!

You have betrayed me, Vane! See!
any day,

According to the tenor of that paper,
He bids your brother bring the army up,
Strafford shall head it and take full
revenge.

Seek Strafford! Let him have the same,
before

He rises to defend himself!

Queen. In truth?
That your shrewd Hollis should have
worked a change

Like this! You, late reluctant . . .

Cha. Say, *Carlisle*,
Your brother Percy brings the army up,
Falls on the Parliament—(I'll think of
you,

My Hollis!) say, we plotted long—'tis
mine,

The scheme is mine, remember! Say,
I cursed

Vane's folly in your hearing! If the
Earl

Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall
lie

With you, *Carlisle!*

Lady Car. Nay, fear not me!
but still

That's a bright moment, sir, you throw
away.

Tear down the veil and save him!

Queen. Go, *Carlisle!*

Lady Car. (I shall see Strafford—
speak to him: my heart

Must never beat so, then! And if I
tell

The truth? What's gained by false-
hood? There they stand

Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How
vain

To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall
know,

Thoroughly know them!)

Queen. Trust to me!

[*To CARLISLE.*] *Carlisle*,
You seem inclined, alone of all the
Court,

To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan
of yours

Merits much praise, and yet . . .

Lady Car. Time presses, madam.

Queen. Yet—may it not be some-
thing premature?

Strafford defends himself to-day—
reserves

Some wondrous effort, one may well
suppose!

Lady Car. Ay, Hollis hints as much.

Cha. Why linger then?

Haste with the scheme—my scheme:
I shall be there

To watch his look. Tell him I watch
his look!

Queen. Stay, we'll precede you!

Lady Car. At your pleasure.

Cha. Say—

Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!
I shall be there, remember!

Lady Car. Doubt me not.

Cha. On our return, *Carlisle*, we wait
you here!

Lady Car. I'll bring his answer. Sir,
I follow you.

(Prove the King faithless, and I take
away

All Strafford cares to live for: let it
be—

'Tis the King's scheme!

My Strafford, I can save,
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce
content.

Because my poor name will not cross
your mind.
Strafford, how much I am unworthy
you !)

SCENE II.—*A passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

*Many groups of Spectators of the Trial.
Officers of the Court, &c.*

First Spec. More crowd than ever !
Not know Hampden, man ?
That 's he, by Pym, Pym that is speak-
ing now.

No, truly, if you look so high you'll see
Little enough of either !

Second Spec. Stay : Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.

Third Spec. Ay, ay, we've heard
Some pretty speaking : yet the Earl
escapes.

Fourth Spec. I fear it : just a foolish
word or two

About his children—and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the
man

Who, sick, half-blind . . .

Second Spec. What 's that
Pym 's saying now

Which makes the curtains flutter ? look !
A hand

Clutches them. Ah ! The King's hand !

Fifth Spec. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said
he, friend ?

Second Spec. ' Nor is this way a novel
way of blood,'
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look !
look !

Many Spectators. There !
What ails him ? no—he rallies, see—
goes on

And Strafford smiles. Strange !

An Officer. Haselrig !

Many Spectators. Friend ? Friend ?

The Officer. Lost, utterly lost ! just
when we looked for Pym

To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech ! Is Haselrig with-
out ?

Pym's message is to him.

Third Spec. Now, said I true ?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or
no ?

First Spec. Never believe it, man !
These notes of Vane's
Ruin the Earl.

Fifth Spec. A brave end : not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the
Trial

Is closed. No—Strafford means to
speak again ?

An Officer. Stand back, there !
Fifth Spec. Why,
the Earl is coming hither !

Before the court breaks up ! His brother,
look,—

You'd say he deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.

An Officer. Stand back, I say !
Second Spec. Who 's the veiled woman
that he talks with ?

Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl ! the Earl !

[*Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, and
other Secretaries, HOLLIS, LADY
CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR,
&c. STRAFFORD converses with
LADY CARLISLE.*

Hol. So near the end !
Be patient—Return !

Straf. [*To his Secretaries.*] Here—any-
where—or, 'tis freshest here !

To spend one's April here, the blossom-
month !

Set it down here !

[*They arrange a table, papers, &c.*
So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more 's to
do ?

What 's to be answered, Slingsby ? Let
us end !

[*To LADY CARLISLE.*] Child, I refuse his
offer ; whatsoever

It be ! Too late ! Tell me no word of
him !

'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you
that—

To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen
days

Fighting for life and fame against a
pack

Of very curs, that lie thro' thick and
thin,

Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and
can't say

'Strafford' if it would take my life!

Lady Car. Be moved!

Glance at the paper!

Straf. Already at my heels!
Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the track again.

Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!

[*Messengers from LANE and other of STRAFFORD'S Counsel within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*]

Straf. [*setting himself to write and dictate.*] I shall beat you, Hollis!

Do you know that? In spite of St. John's tricks,

In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank from me!

Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.

[*To a Messenger.*] In truth? This slip, tell Lane, contains as much

As I can call to mind about the matter.

Eliot would have disdained . . .

[*Calling after the Messenger.*] And

Radcliffe, say,

The only person who could answer Pym, is safe in prison, just for that.

Well, well!

It had not been recorded in that case, I baffled you.

[*To LADY CARLISLE.*] Nay, child, why look so grieved?

All's gained without the King! You saw Pym quail?

What shall I do when they acquit me, think you,

But tranquilly resume my task as though Nothing had intervened since I proposed

To call that traitor to account! Such tricks,

Trust me, shall not be played a second time,

Say, even against Laud, with his grey hair—

Your good work, Hollis! Peace! to make amends

You, Lucy, shall be there when I impeach

Pym and his fellows.

Hol. Wherefore not protest Against our whole proceeding, long ago?

Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while

Enduring patiently?

Straf. Child, I'll tell you—

You, and not Pym—you, the slight graceful girl

Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis—

Why I stood patient! I was fool enough

To see the will of England in Pym's will,

To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait

Her judgment,—when, behold, in place of it . . .

[*To a Messenger who whispers.*] Tell Lane to answer no such question!

Law,—

I grapple with their law! I'm here to try My actions by their standard, not my own!

Their law allowed that levy: what's the rest

To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?

Lady Car. The King's so weak!

Secure this chance! 'Twas Vane,

Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes . . .

Straf. Fit,—very fit, those precious notes of Vane,

To close the Trial worthily! I feared Some spice of nobleness might linger yet

And spoil the character of all the Past. Vane eased me . . . and I will go back

and say

As much—to Pym, to England! Follow me!

I have a word to say! There! my defence

Is done!

Stay! why be proud? Why care to own

My gladness, my surprise?—Nay, not surprise!

Wherefore insist upon the little pride Of doing all myself, and sparing him

The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!

When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,

One image was before me: could I fail? Child, care not for the Past, so indistinct,

Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it 'Tis so forgotten! From this day begins

A new life, founded on a new belief In Charles.

Hol. In Charles? Rather, believe in Pym!

And here he comes in proof ! Appeal to Pym !

Say how unfair . . .

Straf. To Pym ? I would say nothing !

I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Car. Stay, let me have to think I pressed your hand !

[*STRAFFORD and his friends go out.*]

Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save that great misguided man !

Plead Strafford's cause with Pym ! I have remarked

He moved no muscle when we all de-claimed

Against him : you had but to breathe—he turned

Those kind, calm eyes upon you.

[*Enter PYM, the Solicitor-General St. JOHN, the Managers of the Trial, FIENNES, RUDYARD, &c.*]

Rud. Horrible !

Still now all hearts were with you : I withdraw

For one. Too horrible ! But we mistake Your purpose, Pym : you cannot snatch away

The last spar from the drowning man.

Fien. He talks

With St. John of it—see, how quietly ! [To other Presbyterians.] You'll join us ?

Strafford may deserve the worst : But this new course is monstrous.

Vane. take heart !

This Bill of his Attainder shall not have One true man's hand to it.

Vane. Consider, Pym !

Confront your Bill, your own Bill : what is it ?

You cannot catch the Earl on any charge,—

No man will say the law has hold of him On any charge ; and therefore you resolve

To take the general sense on his desert, As though no law existed, and we met

To found one. You refer to Parliament To speak its thought upon this hideous

mass

Of half-borne out assertions, dubious hints

Hereafter to be cleared, distortions—ay, And wild inventions. Every man is saved

The task of fixing any single charge On Strafford : he has but to see in him The enemy of England.

Pym. A right scruple !

I have heard some called England's enemy

With less consideration.

Vane. Pity me !

Indeed you made me think I was your friend !

I who have murdered Strafford, how remove

That memory from me ?

Pym. I absolve you, *Vane.*

Take you no care for aught that you have done !

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill ! Reject this Bill !

He staggers through the ordeal : let him go,

Strew no fresh fire before him ! Plead for us !

When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears !

Hamp. England speaks louder : who are we, to play

The generous pardoner at her expense, Magnanimously waive advantages,

And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill ?

Vane. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fien. And England trusts you.

Hamp. Shame be his, who turns

The opportunity of serving her She trusts him with, to his own mean account—

Who would look nobly frank at her expense !

Fien. I never thought it could have come to this.

Pym. But I have made myself familiar, *Fiennes,*

With this one thought—have walked, and sat, and slept,

This thought before me. I have done such things,

Being the chosen man that should destroy

The traitor. You have taken up this thought

To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way
right at last.

Fien. Had we made outsome weightier charge!

Pym. You say
That these are petty charges: can we come

To the real charge at all? There he is safe

In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:
The cheek burns, the blood tingles,
when you speak

The words, but where's the power to take revenge

Upon them? We must make occasion serve,—

The oversight here, pay for the main sin
That mocks us.

Rud. But this unexampled course,
This Bill!

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of precedent and custom, and at once
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in
all,

The conscience of each bosom, shine
upon

The guilt of Strafford: each shall lay
his hand

Upon his breast, and judge.

Vane. I only see
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all
beyond!

Rud. and others. Forgive him! He
would join us, now he finds

What the King counts reward! The
pardon, too,

Should be your own. Yourself should
bear to Strafford

The pardon of the Commons.

Pym. Meet him? Strafford?
Have we to meet once more, then? Be
it so!

And yet—the prophecy seemed half
fulfilled

When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my
youth,

Our friendship, divers thoughts came
back at once

And left me, for a time . . . 'Tis very sad!
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane—to-morrow?

Vane. Not before to-morrow—
So, time enough! I knew you would
relent!

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you
introduce

The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III.—Whitehall.

The KING.

Cha. My loyal servant!—To defend
himself

Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us!

We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, the
Future

Must recompense the Past.

She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now!

The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it,
I fear,

For love of me. 'Twas too precipitate:
Before the army's fairly on its march,
He'll be at large: no matter.

Well, Carlisle!

Enter PYM.

Pym. Fear me not, sir:—my mission
is to save,

This time.
Cha. To break thus on me! Un-
announced!

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.
Cha. No more

Of Strafford! I have heard too much
from you.

Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People:
will you hear

A word upon my own account?

Cha. Of Strafford?
(So, turns the tide already? Have we
tamed

The insolent brawler?—Strafford's elo-
quence

Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford,
sir,

Has spoken for himself.
Pym. Sufficiently.

I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take : the Trial fails.

Cha. Yes—yes—
We are aware, sir : for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule ! I would learn from your
own mouth

—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds
set forth

Within that parchment, you, sir, can
resolve

To grant your own consent to it. That
Bill

Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should
guide

Your judgment, ere another week such
will

Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.

Cha. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill ?

Pym. I can.

Cha. He is my friend, sir : I have
wronged him : mark you,
Had I not wronged him, this might be.

You think
Because you hate the Earl . . . (turn not
away,

We know you hate him)—no one else
could love

Strafford : but he has saved me, some
affirm.

Think of his pride ! And, do you know
one strange,

One frightful thing ? We all have used
the man

As though a drudge of ours, with not
a source

Of happy thoughts except in us ; and
yet

Strafford has wife and children, house-
hold cares,

Just as if we had never been. Ah, sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary
man

Wed to your cause—to England if you
will !

Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to Eng-
land ! Draw not back !

Cha. Prevent that Bill, sir ! All your
course seems fair

Till now. Why, in the end, 'tis I should
sign

The warrant for his death ! You have
said much

I ponder on ; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I
take

The Commons' counsel ; but this Bill
is yours—

Nor worthy of its leader : care not, sir,
For that, however ! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied ?

Pym. Listen to me, sir ! Eliot laid
his hand,

Wasted and white, upon my forehead
once ;

Wentworth—he's gone now !—has
talked on, whole nights,

And I beside him ; Hampden loves me :
sir,

How can I breathe and not wish Eng-
land well,

And her King well ?

Cha. I thank you, sir ! who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir !

Pym. Let me speak !
—Who may not speak again ; whose
spirit yearns

For a cool night after this weary day :
—Who would not have my soul turn
sicker yet

In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.

I thought, sir, could I find myself with
you,

After this Trial, alone, as man to man—
I might say something, warn you, pray
you, save—

Mark me, King Charles, save—you !
But God must do it. Yet I warn you,
sir—

(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on
me)

As you would have no deeper question
moved

—' How long the Many must endure the
One,'

Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not inter-
fere !

Or—

Cha. God forsakes me. I am in a net.
And cannot move. Let all be as you
say !

Enter LADY CARLISLE.

Lady Car. He loves you—looking
beautiful with joy
Because you sent me ! he would spare
you all
The pain ! he never dreamed you would
forsake
Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
Your scheme returned ! That generous
heart of his !
He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you—you,
sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul . . .
[*Seeing Pym.*] Well met !
No fear for Strafford ! all that's true
and brave
On your own side shall help us : we are
now
Stronger than ever.

Ha—what, sir, is this ?
All is not well ! What parchment have
you there ?

Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.

Lady Car. This Bill ! Your lip
Whitens—you could not read one line
to me

Your voice would falter so !

Pym. No recreant yet !
The great word went from England to
my soul,

And I arose. The end is very near.

Lady Car. I am to save him ! All
have shrunk beside—
'Tis only I am left ! Heaven will make
strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let
both die !

ACT V

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, LADY CARLISLE.

Hol. Tell the King, then ! Come in
with me !

Lady Car. Not so !
He must not hear till it succeeds.

Hol. Succeed ?

No dream was half so vain—you'd
rescue Strafford

And outwit Pym ! I cannot tell you . . .
lady,

The block pursues me, and the hideous
show

To-day . . . is it to-day ? And all the
while

He's sure of the King's pardon. Think,
I have

To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me ! I'll not see
Strafford !

Lady Car. Only, if I succeed, re-
member—Charles

Has saved him ! He would hardly value
life

Unless his gift. My staunch friends
wait. Go in—

You must go in to Charles !

Hol. And all beside
Left Strafford long ago. The King has
signed

The warrant for his death : the Queen
was sick

Of the eternal subject. For the Court,—
The Trial was amusing in its way,

Only too much of it : the Earl withdrew
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so
young,

Amid rude mercenaries—you devise
A plan to save him ! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you ?

Lady Car. I may go, you think,
To France with him ? And you reward

me, friend,
Who lived with Strafford even from his
youth

Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of
his.

I have learned somewhat of his latter
life,

And all the future I shall know : but,
Hollis,

I ought to make his youth my own as
well.

Tell me,—when he is saved !

Hol. My gentle friend,
He should know all and love you, but
'tis vain !

Lady Car. Love ? no—too late now !
Let him love the King !

'Tis the King's scheme ! I have your word, remember !

We'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick !

Quick ! Each of us has work to do, beside !

Go to the King ! I hope—Hollis—I hope !

Say nothing of my scheme ! Hush, while we speak

Think where he is ! Now for my gallant friends !

Hol. Where he is ? Calling wildly upon Charles,

Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.

Let the King tell him ! I'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II.—*The Tower.*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his Children.*

They sing.

*O bel' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera !*

William. The boat's in the broad moonlight all this while—

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera !*

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon

Into the shadowy distance ; only still You hear the dipping oar—

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all's quite gone,

Music and light and all, like a lost star.

Anne. But you should sleep, father : you were to sleep.

Straf. I do sleep, Anne ; or if not—you must know

There's such a thing as . . .

Wil. You're too tired to sleep ?

Straf. It will come by-and-by and all day long,

In that old quiet house I told you of :

We sleep safe there.

Anne. Why not in Ireland ?

Straf.

No !

Too many dreams !—That song's for Venice, William :

You know how Venice looks upon the map—

Isles that the mainland hardly can let go ?

Wil. You've been to Venice, father ?

Straf. I was young then.

Wil. A city with no King ; that's why I like

Even a song that comes from Venice.

Straf. William !

Wil. Oh, I know why ! Anne, do you love the King ?

But I'll see Venice for myself one day.

Straf. See many lands, boy—England last of all,—

That way you'll love her best.

Wil. Why do men say

You sought to ruin her, then ?

Straf. Ah,—they say that.

Wil. Why ?

Straf. I suppose they must have words to say,

As you to sing.

Anne. But they make songs beside :

Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,

That called you . . . Oh, the names !

Wil. Don't mind her, father !

They soon left off when I cried out to them.

Straf. We shall so soon be out of it, my boy !

'Tis not worth while: who heeds a foolish song ?

Wil. Why, not the King.

Straf. Well : it has been the fate Of better ; and yet,—wherefore not feel sure

That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend

All the fantastic day's caprice, consign To the low ground once more the ignoble

Term,

And raise the Genius on his orb again,— That Time will do me right ?

Anne. (Shall we sing, William ?

He does not look thus when we sing.)

Straf. For Ireland,

Something is done : too little, but enough

To show what might have been.

Wil. (I have no heart

To sing now ! Anne, how very sad he looks !

Oh, I so hate the King for all he says !)

Straf. Forsook them ! What, the common songs will run

That I forsook the People ? Nothing more ?

Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,

Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves

Noisy to be enrolled,—will register

The curious glosses, subtle notices,

Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see

Beside that plain inscription of The Name—

The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford !

[*The children resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.

Straf. No,—Hollis ? in good time !—Who is he ?

Hol. One

That must be present.

Straf. Ah—I understand. They will not let me see poor Laud alone.

How politic ! They'd use me by degrees To solitude : and just as you came in

I was solicitous what life to lead

When Strafford's 'not so much as Constable

In the King's service.' Is there any means

To keep one's self awake ? What would you do

After this bustle, Hollis, in my place ?

Hol. Strafford !

Straf. Observe, not but that Pym and you

Will find me news enough—news I shall hear

Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged

My newsman. Or, a better project now—What if when all's consummated, and

the Saints

Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly,—

What if I venture up, some day, unseen,

To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,

Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly

Into a tavern, hear a point discussed, As, whether Strafford's name were John or James—

And be myself appealed to—I, who shall Myself have near forgotten !

Hol. I would speak . . .

Straf. Then you shall speak,—not now : I want just now,

To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place

Is full of ghosts.

Hol. Nay, you must hear me, Strafford !

Straf. Oh, readily ! Only, one rare thing more,—

The minister ! Who will advise the King,

Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and whatnot, And yet have health—children, for

ought I know—

My patient pair of traitors ! Ah,—but, William—

Does not his cheek grow thin ?

Wil. 'Tis you look thin, Father !

Straf. A scamper o'er the breezy wolds

Sets all to-rights.

Hol. You cannot sure forget A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford ?

Straf. No, Why, no. I would not touch on that,

the first.

I left you that. Well, Hollis ? Say at once,

The King can find no time to set me free !

A mask at Theobalds ?

Hol. Hold : no such affair Detains him.

Straf. True : what needs so great a matter ?

The Queen's lip may be sore. Well : when he pleases,—

Only, I want the air : it vexes flesh To be pent up so long.

Hol. The King—I bear His message, Strafford : pray you, let me speak !

Straf. Go, William ! 'Anne, try o'er
your song again !

[*The children retire.*
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I know your message : you have nothing
new

To tell me : from the first I guessed as
much.

I know, instead of coming here himself
Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping—bids me
trudge

While the mob gapes upon some show
prepared

On the other side of the river ! Give at
once

His order of release ! I've heard, as well,
Of certain poor manœuvrings to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk ;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the
Lords,

Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . .

Where's the order ?

Hol. Spare me !

Straf. Why, he'd not have
me steal away ?

With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's ? Be smuggled into
France, perhaps ?

Hollis, 'tis for my children ! 'Twas for
them

I first consented to stand day by day
And give your Puritans the best of
words,

Be patient, speak when called upon,
observe

Their rules, and not return them prompt
their lie !

What's in that boy of mine that he
should prove

Son to a prison-breaker ? I shall stay
And he'll stay with me. Charles
should know as much—

He too has children !

[*Turning to HOLLIS'S companion.*] Sir,
you feel for me !

No need to hide that face ! Though it
have looked

Upon me from the judgment-seat . . .
I know

Strangely, that somewhere it has looked
on me . . .

Your coming has my pardon, nay, my
thanks.

For there is One who comes not.

Hol. Whom forgive,
As one to die !

Straf. Truc, all die, and all need
Forgiveness : I forgive him from my
soul.

Hol. 'Tis a world's wonder : Straf-
ford, you must die !

Straf. Sir, if your errand is to set me
free

This heartless jest mars much. Ha !
Tears in truth ?

We'll end this ! See this paper, warm—
feel—warm

With lying next my heart ! Whose hand
is there ?

Whose promise ? Read, and loud for
God to hear !

'Strafford shall take no hurt'—read
it, I say !

'In person, honour, nor estate'—

Hol. The King . . .

Straf. I could unking him by a breath !
You sit

Where Loudon sat, who came to pro-
phesy

The certain end, and offer me Pym's
grace

If I'd renounce the King : and I stood
firm

On the King's faith. The King who
lives . . .

Hol. To sign

The warrant for your death.

Straf. 'Put not your trust
In princes, neither in the sons of
men,

In whom is no salvation !'

Hol. Trust in God.

The scaffold is prepared : they wait for
you :

He has consented. Cast the earth
behind !

Cha. You would not see me, Straf-
ford, at your foot !

It was wrong from me ! Only curse me
not !

Hol. [*To STRAFFORD.*] As you hope
grace and pardon in your need,

Be merciful to this most wretched man !
[*Voices from within.*]

*Verso la sera
Di Primavera.*

Straf. You'll be good to those children, sir ? I know
You'll not believe her, even should the Queen

Think they take after one they rarely saw.

I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters : but you are
So utterly deprived of friends ! He too
Must serve you—will you not be good
to him ?

Or, stay, sir, do not promise—do not swear !

You, Hollis—do the best you can for me !
I've not a soul to trust to : Wandesford's dead,

And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next :

I've found small time of late for my affairs,

But I trust any of you, Pym himself—
No one could hurt them : there's an infant, too—

These tedious cares ! Your Majesty could spare them !

Nay—pardon me, my King ! I had forgotten

Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness : there escaped a peevish word—

'Tis gone : I bless you at the last. You know

All's between you and me : what has the world

To do with it ? Farewell !

Cha. [*at the door.*] Balfour ! Balfour !

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament !—go to them : I grant all

Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent :

Tell them to keep their money if they will :

I'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat : only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen
shall choose !

—You never heard the People howl for blood,

Beside !

Bal. Your Majesty may hear them now :

The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out :

Please you retire !

Cha. Take all the troops, Balfour !
Bal. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

Cha. Come with me, Strafford ! You'll not fear, at least !

Straf. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this !

I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .

Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say,
Balfour,

The King was sorry : 'tis no shame in him :

Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block

Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir !
Earth fades, Heaven breaks on me : I shall stand next

Before God's throne : the moment's close at hand

When Man the first, last time, has leave to lay

His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave

To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—

What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you ?
Be saved

Through me ! Bear witness, no one could prevent

My death ! Lead on ! ere he awake—best, now !

All must be ready : did you say, Balfour,

The crowd began to murmur ? They'll be kept

Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's !
Now ! but tread softly—children are at play

In the next room. Precede ! I follow—

Enter LADY CARLISLE, with many Attendants.

Lady Car. Me !
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved !

The King ?
[*To the KING.*] Well—as you ordered, they are ranged without, The convoy . . . [*seeing the KING's state.*]
[*To STRAFFORD.*] You know all, then !

Why, I thought
It looked best that the King should save you, Charles
Alone ; 'tis shame that you should owe me aught.

Or, no, not shame ! Strafford, you'll not feel shame
At being saved by me ?

Hol. All true ! Oh Strafford, She saves you ! all her deed ! this lady's deed !

And is the boat in readiness ? You, friend,
Are Billingsley, no doubt ! Speak to her, Strafford !

See how she trembles, waiting for your voice !

The world's to learn its bravest story yet !

Lady Car. Talk afterward ! Long nights in France enough,
To sit beneath the vines and talk of home !

Straf. You love me, child ! Ah, Strafford can be loved

As well as Vane ! I could escape, then ?
Lady Car. Haste !

Advance the torches, Bryan !
Straf. I will die.

They call me proud : but England had no right,
When she encountered me—her strength to mine—

To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl, I fought her to the utterance, I fell, I am hers now, and I will die. Beside, The lookers-on ! Eliot is all about This place with his most uncomplaining brow.

Lady Car. Strafford !
Straf. I think if you

could know how much
I love you, you would be repaid, my friend !

Lady Car. Then, for my sake !
Straf. Even for your sweet sake,
I stay.

Hol. For their sake !
Straf. To bequeath a stain ?
Leave me ! Girl, humour me and let me die !

Lady Car. Bid him escape—wake, King ! Bid him escape !

Straf. True, I will go ! Die, and forsake the King ?

I'll not draw back from the last service.
Lady Car. Strafford !

Straf. And, after all, what is disgrace to me ?

Let us come, child ! That it should end this way !

Lead then ! but I feel strangely : it was not

To end this way.
Lady Car. Lean—lean on me !

Straf. My King !
Oh, had he trusted me—his friend of friends !—

Lady Car. I can support him, Hollis !
Straf. Not this way !

This gate—I dreamed of it, this very gate.

Lady Car. It opens on the river : our good boat

Is moored below, our friends are there.
Straf. The same.

Only with something ominous and dark, Fatal, inevitable.

Lady Car. Strafford ! Strafford !
Straf. Not by this gate ! I feel what

will be there !
I dreamed of it, I tell you : touch it not !

Lady Car. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King !

[*As STRAFFORD opens the door, Pym is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, &c. STRAFFORD falls back : Pym follows slowly and confronts him.*]

Pym. Have I done well ? Speak, England ! Whose sole sake

I still have laboured for, with disregard To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made

Barren, my Future waste, to offer up Her sacrifice—this man, this Wentworth here—

Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
 And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
 I hunted by all means (trusting that she
 Would sanctify all means) even to the block
 Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
 No bitter pang than first I felt, the hour
 I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
 Would never leave him : I do leave him now.
 I render up my charge (be witness, God!) To England who imposed it. I have done
 Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be,
 With ill effects—for I am weak, a man : Still, I have done my best, my human best,
 Not faltering for a moment. It is done. And this said, if I say . . . yes, I will say
 I never loved but one man—David not More Jonathan ! Even thus, I love him now :
 And look for my chief portion in that world
 Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
 (Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon :
 My mission over, I shall not live long.)—
 Ay, here I know I talk—I dare and must, Of England, and her great reward, as all
 I look for there ; but in my inmost heart,
 Believe, I think of stealing quite away To walk once more with Wentworth—
 my youth's friend
 Purged from all error, gloriously renewed, And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .
 This is no meeting, Wentworth ! Tears increase
 Too hot. A thin mist—is it blood ?—enwraps
 The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be !

Straf. I have loved England too ; we'll meet then, Pym !
 As well die now ! Youth is the only time To think and to decide on a great course :
 Manhood with action follows ; but 'tis dreary
 To have to alter our whole life in age—The time past, the strength gone ! as well die now.
 When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right—not now !
 Best die. Then if there's any fault, it too
 Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Laud
 May dream his dream out of a perfect Church
 In some blind corner. And there's no one left.
 I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym !
 And yet, I know not ! I shall not be there !
 Friends fail—if he have any ! And he's weak,
 And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is nothing—
 Nothing ! But not that awful head—not that !
 Pym, you help England ! I, that am to die,
 What I must see ! 'tis here—all here ! My God !
 Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire, How Thou wilt plague him, satiating Hell !
 What ? England that you help, become through you
 A green and putrefying charnel, left Our children . . . some of us have children,
 Pym—
 Some who, without that, still must ever wear
 A darkened brow, an over-serious look, And never properly be young ! No word ?
 You will not say a word—to me—to Him ?
Pym. England,—I am thine own !
 Dost thou exact
 That service ? I obey thee to the end.

PAULINE¹

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes, And loosened hair, and breathing lips, and arms Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen To shut me in with thee, and from all fear, So that I might unlock the sleepless brood Of fancies from my soul, their lurking place, Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return To one so watched, so loved, and so secured. But what can guard thee but thy naked love ? Ah, dearest ! whoso sucks a poisoned wound Envenoms his own veins,—thou art so good, So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow less light For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept From out thy soul, as from a sacred star. Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain To hope to sing; some woe would light on me ; Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip Was bathed in her enchantments— whose brow burned Beneath the crown, to which her secrets knelt ; Who learned the spell which can call up the dead, And then departed, smiling like a fiend Who has deceived God. If such one should seek Again her altars, and stand robed and crowned</p> | <p>Amid the faithful : sad confession first, Remorse and pardon, and old claims renewed, Ere I can be—as I shall be no more. I had been spared this shame, if I had sat By thee for ever, from the first, in place Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good, Or with them, as an earnest of their truth. No thought nor hope, having been shut from thee, No vague wish unexplained—no wan- dering aim Sent back to bind on Fancy's wings, and seek Some strange fair world, where it might be a law ; But doubting nothing, had been led by thee, Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length awaked, Who has slept thro' a peril. Ah ! vain, vain ! Thou lovest me—the past is in its grave, Tho' its ghost haunts us—still this much is ours, To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing Wait for us in the darkness. Thou lovest me, And thou art to receive not love, but faith, For which thou wilt be mine, and smile, and take All shapes, and shames, and veil without a fear That form which music follows like a slave ; And I look to thee, and I trust in thee, As in a Northern night one looks away Unto the East for morn, and spring and joy. Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,</p> |
|--|--|

¹ [Not in 1868 edition ; reprinted from the first edition, of 1833]

| | |
|--|---|
| And resting on some few old feelings, won | Distinct from theirs—that I am sad— and fain |
| Back by thy beauty, would'st that I essay | Would give up all to be but where I was. Not high as I had been, if faithful found— |
| The task, which was to me what now thou art : | But low and weak, yet full of hope, and sure |
| And why should I conceal one weakness more ? | Of goodness as of life—that I would lose All this gay mastery of mind, to sit Once more with them, trusting in truth and love, |
| Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when Winter | And with an aim—not being what I am. |
| Crept aged from the earth, and Spring's first breath | Oh, Pauline ! I am ruined ! who believed That tho' my soul had floated from its sphere |
| Blew soft from the moist hills—the blackthorn boughs, | Of wide dominion into the dim orb Of self—that it was strong and free as ever :— |
| So dark in the bare wood ; when glis- tening | It has conformed itself to that dim orb, Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now |
| In the sunshine were white with coming buds, | Must stay where it alone can be adored. I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which |
| Like the bright side of a sorrow—and the banks | I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt |
| Had violets opening from sleep like eyes— | A strange delight in causing my decay ; I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever |
| I walked with thee, who knew not a deep shame | Within some ocean-cave ; and ages rolled, |
| Lurked beneath smiles and careless words, which sought | Till thro' the cleft rock, like a moon- beam, came |
| To hide it—till they wandered and were mute ; | A white swan to remain with me ; and ages |
| As we stood listening on a sunny mound To the wind murmuring in the damp copse, | Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy In gazing on the peace of its pure wings. And then I said, ' It is most fair to me, Yet its soft wings must sure have suf- fered change |
| Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing | From the thick darkness—sure its eyes are dim— |
| Betrayed by sleep—until the feeling rushed | Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed |
| That I was low indeed, yet not so low As to endure the calmness of thine eyes ; And so I told thee all, while the cool breast | With sleeping ages here ; it cannot leave me, |
| I leaned on altered not its quiet beating ; And long ere words, like a hurt bird's complaint, | For it would seem, in light, beside its kind, |
| Bad me look up and bewhat I had been, I felt despair could never live by thee. | Withered— tho' here to me most beauti- ful.' |
| Thou wilt remember :—thou art not more dear | And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes, |
| Than song was once to me ; and I ne'er sung | |
| But as one entering bright halls, where all Will rise and shout for him. Sure I must own | |
| That I am fallen—having chosen gifts | |

As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god—I watched his
radiant form

Growing less radiant—and it gladdened
me ;

Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine
Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,
He turned to look at me, ere I could lose
The grin with which I viewed his
perishing.

And he shrieked and departed, and sat
long

By his deserted throne—but sunk at
last,

Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and
curled

Around him, 'I am still a god—to thee.'
Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,
For all the wandering and all the weak-
ness

Will be a saddest comment on the song.
And if, that done, I can be young again,
I will give up all gained as willingly

As one gives up a charm which shuts
him out

From hope, or part, or care, in human
kind.

As life wanes, all its cares, and strife, and
toil,

Seem strangely valueless, while the old
trees

Which grew by our youth's home—the
waving mass

Of climbing plants, heavy with bloom
and dew—

The morning swallows with their songs
like words,—

All these seem clear and only worth our
thoughts.

So aught connected with my early
life—

My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
How I look on them—most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years !

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for
this,

Had not the glow I felt at His award
Assured me all was not extinct within.

His whom all honour—whose renown
springs up

Like sunlight which will visit all the
world ;

So that e'en they who sneered at him at
first

Come out to it, as some dark spider
crawls

From his foul nets, which some lit torch
invades

Yet spinning still new films for his
retreat.—

Thou didst smile, poet,—but, can we
forgive ?

Sun-treader—life and light be thine for
ever !

Thou art gone from us—years go by,
and spring

Gladdens, and the young earth is beau-
tiful,

Yet thy songs come not—other bards
arise,

But none like thee ;—they stand—thy
majesties,

Like mighty works which tell some
Spirit there

Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen

And left us, never to return : and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in
vain.

The air seems bright with thy past
presence yet,

But thou art still for me, as thou hast
been

When I have stood with thee, as on a
throne

With all thy dim creations gathered
round

Like mountains,—and I felt of mould
like them,

And creatures of my own were mixed
with them,

Like things half-lived, catching and
giving life.

But thou art still for me, who have
adored,

Tho' single, panting but to hear thy
name,

Which I believed a spell to me alone,
Scarce deeming thou wert as a star to

men—
As one should worship long a sacred
spring

Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which
long grasses cross,

And one small tree embowers droop-
ingly,
Joying to see some wandering insect won,
To live in its few rushes — or some locust
To pasture on its boughs—or some wild
bird
Stoop for its freshness from the track-
less air,
And then should find it but the fountain-
head,
Long lost, of some great river—washing
towns
And towers, and seeing old woods which
will live
But by its banks, untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie
quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous
change;
—Then girl with rocks which seek to
turn or stay
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
Being the pulse of some great country
—so
Wert thou to me—and art thou to the
world.
And I, perchance, half feel a strange
regret,
That I am not what I have been to
thee:
Like a girl one has loved long silently,
In her first loveliness, in some retreat,
When first emerged, all gaze and glow to
view
Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips
which bleed
Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is
sweet
To see her thus adored—but there have
been
Moments, when all the world was in his
praise,
Sweeter than all the pride of after hours.
Yet, Sun-treader, all hail!—from my
heart's heart
I bid thee hail!—e'en in my wildest
dreams
I am proud to feel I would have thrown
up all
The wreaths of fame which seemed o'er-
hanging me,

To have seen thee, for a moment, as
thou art.

And if thou livest—if thou lovest, spirit!
Remember me, who set this final seal
To wandering thought—that one so
pure as thou

Could never die. Remember me, who
flung

All honour from my soul—yet paused
and said,

'There is one spark of lover remaining yet,
For I have nought in common with him
—shapes

Which followed him avoid me, and foul
forms

Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his
mind;

And tho' I feel how low I am to him,
Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
Of all the harmonies he called up,
So one gleam still remains, altho' the last.
Remember me—who praise thee e'en
with tears,

For never more shall I walk calm with
thee;

Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
A melody, some wond'rous singer sings,
Which, though it haunt men oft in the
still eve,

They dream not to essay; yet it no less,
But more is honoured. I was thine in
shame,

And now when all thy proud renown is
out,

I am a watcher, whose eyes have grown
dim

With looking for some star—which
breaks on him,

Altered, and worn, and weak, and full of
tears.

Autumn has come—like Spring returned
to us,

Won from her girlishness—like one
returned

A friend that was a lover—nor forgets
The first warm love, but full of sober
thoughts

Of fading years; whose soft mouth
quivers yet

With the old smile—but yet so changed
and still!

And here am I the scoffer, who have
 probed
 Life's vanity, won by a word again
 Into my old life—for one little word
 Of this sweet friend, who lives in loving
 me,
 Lives strangely on my thoughts, and
 looks, and words,
 As fathoms down some nameless ocean
 thing
 Its silent course of quietness and joy.
 O dearest, if, indeed, I tell the past,
 May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream;
 Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon
 Sinks to itself, and whispers, we shall be
 But closer linked—two creatures whom
 the earth
 Bears singly—with strange feelings,
 unrevealed
 But to each other; or two lonely things
 Created by some Power, whose reign is
 done,
 Having no part in God, or his bright
 world,
 I am to sing; whilst ebbing day dies
 soft,
 As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book,
 And in the heaven stars steal out one by
 one,
 As hunted men steal to their mountain
 watch.
 I must not think—lest this new impulse
 die
 In which I trust. I have no confidence,
 So I will sing on—fast as fancies come
 Rudely—the verse being as the mood it
 paints.
 I strip my mind bare—whose first ele-
 ments
 I shall unveil—not as they struggled
 forth
 In infancy, nor as they now exist,
 That I am grown above them, and can
 rule them,
 But in that middle stage, when they
 were full,
 Yet ere I had disposed them to my will;
 And then I shall show how these ele-
 ments
 Produced my present state, and what it
 is.
 I am made up of an intensest life,

Of a most clear idea of consciousness
 Of self—distinct from all its qualities,
 From all affections, passions, feelings,
 powers;
 And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,
 But linked in me, to self-supremacy,
 Existing as a centre to all things,
 Most potent to create, and rule, and call
 Upon all things to minister to it;
 And to a principle of restlessness
 Which would be all, have, see, know,
 taste, feel all—
 This is myself; and I should thus have
 been,
 Though gifted lower than the meanest
 soul.
 And of my powers, one springs up to
 save
 From utter death a soul with such desires
 Confined to clay—which is the only one
 Which marks me—an imagination which
 Has been an angel to me—coming not
 In fitful visions, but beside me ever,
 And never failing me; so tho' my mind
 Forgets not—not a shred of life forgets—
 Yet I can take a secret pride in calling
 The dark past up—to quell it regally.
 A mind like this must dissipate itself,
 But I have always had one lode-star;
 now,
 As I look back, I see that I have wasted,
 Or progressed as I looked toward that
 star—
 A need, a trust, a yearning after God,
 A feeling I have analysed but late,
 But it existed, and was reconciled
 With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
 Which yet, when seen in others, I ab-
 horred.
 I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
 From fear—and thence I date my trust
 in signs
 And omens—for I saw God everywhere;
 And I can only lay it to the fruit
 Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
 Even his being—having always felt
 His presence—never acting from myself,
 Still trusting in a hand that leads me
 through
 All danger; and this feeling still has
 fought
 Against my weakest reason and resolves.

And I can love nothing—and this dull
truth
Has come the last—but sense supplies
a love
Encircling me and mingling with my life.
These make myself—I have sought in
vain
To trace how they were formed by
circumstance,
For I still find them—turning my wild
youth
Where they alone displayed themselves,
converting
All objects to their use—now see their
course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life,
Which passed alone with wisest ancient
books,
All halo-girt with fancies of my own,
And I myself went with the tale—a god,
Wandering after beauty—or a giant,
Standing vast in the sunset—an old
hunter,
Talking with gods—or a high-crested
chief,
Sailing with troops of friends to Tene-
dos;—
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear
As the place, the time, the fashion of
those lives.
I had not seen a work of lofty art,
Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's
face,
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as
those
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea:
The deep groves, and white temples, and
wet caves—
And nothing ever will surprise me now—
Who stood beside the naked Swift-
footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proser-
pine's hair.

And strange it is, that I who could so
dream,
Should e'er have stooped to aim at
aught beneath—
Aught low, or painful, but I never
doubted;
So as I grew, I rudely shaped my life

To my immediate wants, yet strong
beneath
Was a vague sense of powers folded up—
A sense that tho' those shadowy times
were past,
Their spirit dwelt in me, and I should
rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint
chained down
My soul, till it was changed. I lost
myself,
And were it not that I so loathe that
time,
I could recall how first I learned to turn
My mind against itself; and the effects,
In deeds for which remorse were vain,
as for
The wanderings of delirious dream; yet
thence
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which
so long
Have spotted me—at length I was
restored,
Yet long the influence remained; and
nought
But the still life I led, apart from all,
Which left my soul to seek its old delights,
Could e'er have brought me thus far
back to peace.
As peace returned, I sought out some
pursuit:
And song rose—no new impulse—but
the one
With which all others best could be
combined.
My life has not been that of those whose
heaven
Was lampless, save where poesy shone
out;
But as a clime, where glittering moun-
tain-tops,
And glancing sea, and forests steeped in
light,
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun;
For music (which is earnest of a heaven,
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,
Not else to be revealed) is as a voice,
A low voice calling Fancy, as a friend,
To the green woods in the gay summer
time.
And she fills all the way with dancing
shapes,

Which have made painters pale ; and
 they go on
 While stars look at them, and winds call
 to them,
 As they leave life's path for the twilight
 world,
 Where the dead gather. This was not
 at first,
 For I scarce knew what I would do.
 I had
 No wish to paint, no yearning—but I
 sang.

And first I sang, as I in dream have seen
 Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,
 Yet singing to herself until it came.

I turned to those old times and scenes,
 where all
 That's beautiful had birth for me, and
 made

Rude verses on them all ; and then I
 paused—
 I had done nothing, so I sought to know
 What mind had yet achieved. No fear
 was mine

As I gazed on the works of mighty bards,
 In the first joy at finding my own
 thoughts

Recorded, and my powers exemplified,
 And feeling their aspirings were my
 own.

And then I first explored passion and
 mind ;

And I began afresh ; I rather sought
 To rival what I wondered at, than form
 Creations of my own ; so much was
 light

Lent back by others, yet much was my
 own.

I paused again—a change was coming
 on,

I was no more a boy—the past was
 breaking

Before the coming, and like fever
 worked.

I first thought on myself—and here my
 powers

Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint,
 but gazed

On all things : schemes and systems
 went and came,

And I was proud (being vainest of the
 weak),

In wandering o'er them, to seek out
 some one

To be my own ; as one should wander
 o'er

The White Way for a star.

.

On one, whom praise of mine would not
 offend,

Who was as calm as beauty—being such
 Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,—
 Believing in them, and devoting all
 His soul's strength to their winning back
 to peace ;

Who sent forth hopes and longings for
 their sake,

Clothed in all passion's melodies, which
 first

Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet
 task,

To gather every breathing of his songs.
 And woven with them there were words,
 which seemed

A key to a new world ; the muttering
 Of angels, of some thing unguessed by
 man.

How my heart beat, as I went on, and
 found

Much there I felt my own mind had
 conceived,

But there living and burning ; soon the
 whole

Of his conceptions dawned on me ; their
 praise

Is in the tongues of men : men's brows
 are high

When his name means a triumph and a
 pride ;

So my weak hands may well forbear to
 dim

What then seemed my bright fate : I
 threw myself.

To meet it. I was vowed to liberty,
 Men were to be as gods, and earth as
 heaven.

And I—ah ! what a life was mine to be,
 My whole soul rose to meet it. Now,
 Pauline,

I shall go mad, if I recall that time.

.

Oh let me look back, e'er I leave for ever
 The time, which was an hour, that one
 waits

For a fair girl, that comes a withered hag.
 And I was lonely,—far from woods and fields,
 And amid dullest sights, who should be loose
 As a stag—yet I was full of joy, who lived
 With Plato, and who had the key to life.
 And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
 And many a thought did I build up on thought,
 As the wild bee hangs cell to cell—in vain;
 For I must still go on: my mind rests not.
 'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
 Which was all new to me; my theories
 Were firm, so I left them, to look upon
 Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys;
 And, as I pondered on them all, I sought
 How best life's end might be attained—
 an end
 Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly, without heart-wreck, I awoke
 As from a dream—I said, 'twas beautiful,
 Yet but a dream; and so adieu to it.
 As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
 Strange towers, and walled gardens,
 thick with trees,
 Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,
 And laughing fairy creatures peeping over,
 And on the morrow, when he comes to live
 For ever by those springs, and trees fruit-flushed,
 And fairy bowers—all his search is vain.
 Well I remember . . .
 First went my hopes of perfecting man-kind,
 And faith in them—then freedom in itself,
 And virtue in itself—and then my motives' ends,
 And powers and loves; and human love went last.
 I felt this no decay, because new powers
 Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,

And happiness; for I had oft been sad,
 Mistrusting my resolves: but now I cast
 Hope joyously away—I laughed and said,
 'No more of this'—I must not think;
 at length
 I look'd again to see how all went on.
 My powers were greater—as some temple seemed
 My soul, where nought is changed, and incense rolls
 Around the altar—only God is gone,
 And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat!
 So I passed through the temple; and to me
 Knelt troops of shadows; and they cried, 'Hail, king!
 We serve thee now, and thou shalt serve no more!
 Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee!' And I said, 'Are ye strong—let fancy bear me
 Far from the past.'—And I was borne away
 As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
 O'er deserts, towers, and forests, I being calm;
 And I said, 'I have nursed up energies,
 They will prey on me.' And a band knelt low,
 And cried, 'Lord, we are here, and we will make
 A way for thee—in thine appointed life
 Oh look on us!' And I said, 'Ye will worship
 Me; but my heart must worship too.' They shouted,
 'Thyself—thou art our king!' So I stood there
 Smiling
 And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
 With which I looked out how to end my days;
 I felt once more myself—my powers were mine;
 I found that youth or health solifted me,
 That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief
 Came nigh me—I must ever be light-hearted;
 And that this feeling was the only veil

Betwixt me and despair: so if age came,
 I should be as a wreck linked to a soul
 Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and
 aware
 Of my decay. So a long summer morn
 Found me; and e'er noon came, I had
 resolved
 No age should come on me, ere youth's
 hopes went,
 For I would wear myself out—like that
 morn
 Which wasted not a sunbeam—every
 joy
 I would make mine, and die. And thus
 I sought
 To chain my spirit down, which I had
 fed
 With thoughts of fame. I said: the
 troubled life
 Of genius, seen so bright when working
 forth
 Some trusted end, seems sad when all in
 vain—
 Most sad, when men have parted with
 all joy
 For their wild fancy's sake, which
 waited first
 As an obedient spirit when delight
 Came not with her alone; but alters
 soon,
 Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to
 depart,
 Leaving a heavy darkness and warm
 tears.
 But I shall never lose her; she will
 live
 Brighter for such seclusion—I but catch
 A hue, a glance of what I sing; so pain
 Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may
 tell
 The radiant sights which dazzle me;
 but now
 They shall be all my own, and let them
 fade
 Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast.
 And when all's done, the few dim
 gleams transferred,—
 (For a new thought sprung up—that it
 were well
 To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave
 such lays
 As would encircle me with praise and
 love;

So I should not die utterly—I should
 bring
 One branch from the gold forest, like
 the knight
 Of old tales, witnessing I had been
 there,)—
 And when all's done, how vain seems
 e'en success,
 And all the influence poets have o'er
 men!
 'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as my-
 self,
 Should sit in his lone room, knowing the
 words
 He utters in his solitude shall move
 Men like a swift wind—that tho' he be
 forgotten,
 Faireyes shall glisten when his beauteous
 dreams
 Of love come true in happier frames
 than his.
 Ay, the still night brought thoughts like
 these, but morn
 Came, and the mockery again laughed
 out
 At hollow praises, and smiles, almost
 sneers;
 And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me
 To dwell with him and his unhonoured
 name—
 And I well knew my spirit, that would
 be
 First in the struggle, and again would
 make
 All bow to it; and I would sink again.
 And then know that this curse will come
 on us,
 To see our idols perish—we may wither;
 Nor marvel—we are clay; but our low
 fate
 Should not extend them, whom trust-
 ingly
 We sent before into Time's yawning
 gulf,
 To face whate'er may lurk in darkness
 there—
 To see the painters' glory pass, and feel
 Sweet music move us not as once, or
 worst,
 To see decaying wits ere the frail body
 Decays. Nought makes me trust in
 love so really

As the delight of the contented lowness
With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for
ever

In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them ;
I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's
best blood,
Withering unseen, that they might
flourish still.

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not
forget

How this mood swayed me, when thou
first wert mine,

When I had set myself to live this life,
Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest
I was most happy, sweet, for old delights
Had come like birds again ; music, my
life,

I nourished more than ever, and old lore
Loved for itself, and all it shows—the
king

Treading the purple calmly to his death,
—While round him, like the clouds of
eve, all dusk,

The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
Pile the dim outline of the coming doom,
—And him sitting alone in blood, while
friends

Are hunting far in the sunshine ; and
the boy,

With his white breast and brow and
clustering curls

Streaked with his mother's blood, and
striving hard

To tell his story ere his reason goes.
And when I loved thee, as I've loved so
oft,

Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and
looked in

My heart to find some feeling like such
love,

Believing I was still what I had been ;
And soon I found all faith had gone from
me,

And the late glow of life—changing like
clouds,

'Twas not the morn-blush widening into
day,

But evening, coloured by the dying sun
While darkness is quick hastening :—
I will tell

My state as though 'twere none of mine
—despair

Cannot come near me—thus it is with
me.

Souls alter not, and mine must progress
still ;

And this I knew not when I flung away
My youth's chief aims. I ne'er sup-
posed the loss

Of what few I retained ; for no resource
Awaits me—now behold the change of
all.

I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest
In its clay prison ; this most narrow
sphere—

It has strange powers, and feelings, and
desires,

Which I cannot account for, nor explain,
But which I stifle not, being bound to
trust

All feelings equally—to hear all sides :
Yet I cannot indulge them, and they
live,

Referring to some state or life un-
known . . .

My selfishness is satiated not,
It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for
All pleasure, howsoever minute, is pain ;
I envy—how I envy him whose mind
Turns with its energies to some one end !
To elevate a sect, or a pursuit,
However mean—so mystill baffled hopes
Seek out abstractions ; I would have
but one

Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine ;
One rapture all my soul could fill—and
this

Wild feeling places me in dream afar,
In some wide country, where the eye can
see

No end to the far hills and dales be-
strewn

With shining towers and dwellings.
I grow mad

Wellnigh, to know not one abode but
holds

Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp
them all,

But must remain with this vile form.
I look

With hope to age at last, which quench-
ing much,

May let me concentrate the sparks it
spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me
A craving after knowledge: the sole
proof

Of a commanding will is in that power
Repressed; for I beheld it in its dawn,
That sleepless harpy, with its budding
wings,

And I considered whether I should
yield

All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,
Finding a recompense in its wild eyes;
And when I found that I should perish
so,

I bade its wild eyes close from me for
ever;—

And I am left alone with my delights,—
So it lies in me a chained thing—still
ready

To serve me, if I loose its slightest
bond—

I cannot but be proud of my bright
slave.

And thus I know this earth is not my
sphere,

For I cannot so narrow me, but that
I still exceed it; in their elements
My love would pass my reason—but
since here

Love must receive its objects from this
earth,

While reason will be chainless, the few
truths

Caught from its wanderings have suf-
ficed to quell

All love below;—then what must be
that love

Which, with the object it demands,
would quell

Reason, tho' it soared with the sera-
phim?

No—what I feel may pass all human
love,

Yet fall far short of what my love should
be;

And yet I seem more warped in this than
aught,

For here myself stands out more hid-
eously.

I can forget myself in friendship, fame,
Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

But I begin to know what thing hate is—

To sicken, and to quiver, and grow
white,

And I myself have furnished its first
prey.

All my sad weaknesses, this wavering
will,

This selfishness, this still decaying
frame . . .

But I must never grieve while I can pass
Far from such thoughts—as now—

Andromeda!

And she is with me—years roll, I shall
change,

But change can touch her not—so beau-
tiful

With her dark eyes, earnest and still,
and hair

Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping
breeze;

And one red-beam, all the storm leaves
in heaven,

Resting upon her eyes and face and hair,
As she awaits the snake on the wet
beach,

By the dark rock, and the white wave
just breaking

At her feet; quite naked and alone,—
a thing

You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that
God

Will come in thunder from the stars to
save her.

Let it pass—I will call another change,
I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,

Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
And in the wane of life; yet only so

As to call up their fears, and there shall
come

A time requiring youth's best energies;
And straight I fling age, sorrow, sickness
off,

And I rise triumphing over my decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm
'Twixt what I am and all that I would
be.

But then to know nothing—to hope for
nothing—

To seize on life's dull joys from a strange
fear,

Lest, losing them, all's lost, and nought
remains.

There 's some vile juggle with my reason
here—

I feel I but explain to my own loss
These impulses—they live no less the
same.

Liberty! what though I despair—my
blood

Rose not at a slave's name prouder
than now.

And sympathy obscured by sophistries.
Why have not I sought refuge in myself,
But for the woes I saw and could not
stay—

And love!—do I not love thee, my
Pauline?

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
Utterly loveless—witness this belief
In poets, tho' sad change has come there
too;

No more I leave myself to follow them :
Unconsciously I measure me by them.
Let me forget it ; and I cherish most
My love of England—how her name—a
word

Of her's in a strange tongue makes my
heart beat !

Pauline, I could do anything—not now—
All 's fever—but when calm shall come
again—

I am prepared—I have made life my
own—

I would not be content with all the
change

One frame should feel—but I have gone
in thought

Thro' all conjuncture—I have lived all
life

When it is most alive—where strangest
fate

New shapes it past surmise—the tales of
men

Bit by some curse—or in the grasps of
doom

Half-visible and still increasing round,
Or crowning their wide being's general
aim.

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet
friend,

As one breathing his weakness to the ear
Of pitying angel—dear as a winter
flower ;

A slight flower growing alone, and
offering

Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold
sun,

Yet joyous and confiding, like the
triumph

Of a child—and why am I not worthy
thee ?

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze
Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,
Or bare my breast for sunbeams which
will kill,

Or open in the night of sounds, to look
For the dim stars ; I can mount with
the bird,

Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves
And twisted boughs of some tall moun-
tain tree,

Or rise cheerfully springing to the
heavens,

Or like a fish breathe in the morning air
In the misty sun-warm water, or with
flowers

And trees can smile in light at the
sinking sun,

Just as the storm comes—as a girl would
look

On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me—see how I could
build

A home for us, out of the world ; in
thought—

I am inspired—come with me, Pauline !

Night, and one single ridge of narrow
path

Between the sullen river and the woods
Waving and muttering—for the moon-
less night

Has shaped them into images of life,
Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,
Looking on earth to know how their
sons fare.

Thou art so close by me, the roughest
swell

Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the
panting

Of thy soft breasts ; no—we will pass
to morning—

| | |
|--|--|
| Morning—the rocks, and valleys, and old woods. | One pond of water gleams—far off the river |
| How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,— | Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but one— |
| Half in the air, like creatures of the place, | One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and wound |
| Trusting the element—living on high boughs | Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies |
| That swing in the wind—look at the golden spray, | Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend |
| Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract, | O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl, And thro' their roots long creeping |
| Amid the broken rocks—shall we stay here | plants stretch out |
| With the wild hawks ?—no, ere the hot noon come | Their twined hair, steeped and spark- ling ; farther on, |
| Dive we down—safe ;—see this our new retreat | Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined |
| Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs. | To narrow it ; so, at length, a silvert thread |
| Dark, tangled, old and green—still sloping down | It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep wood, |
| To a small pool whose waters lie asleep | Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss and stone, |
| Amid the trailing boughs turned water- plants, | It joins its parent-river with a shout. Up for the glowing day—leave the old woods : |
| And tall trees over-arch to keep us in, Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts, | See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky ! |
| And in the dreamy water one small group | Nothing but sky appears, so close the root |
| Of two or three strange trees are got together, | And grass of the hill-top level with the air— |
| Wondering at all around—as strange beasts herd | Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats, laden |
| Together far from their own land—all wildness— | With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick, |
| No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all, | Floating away in the sun in some north sea. |
| And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters, | Air, air—fresh life-blood—thin and searching air— |
| Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head, | The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us : |
| And old grey stones lie making eddies there ; | Where small birds reel and winds take their delight. |
| The wild mice cross them dry-shod— deeper in— | Water is beautiful, but not like air. See, where the solid azure waters lie, Made as of thickened air, and down below |
| Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in : | The fern-ranks, like a forest, spread themselves, |
| This is the very heart of the woods—all round, | As tho' each pore could feel the element ; Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way— |
| Mountain-like, heaped above us ; yet even here | |

Float with me there, Pauline, but not like air.

Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set

On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains,

And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest,

And peer from their spread boughs. There they wave, looking

At the muleteers, who whistle as they go To the merry chime of their morning bells, and all

The little smoking cots, and fields, and banks,

And copses, bright in the sun; my spirit wanders.

Hedgerows for me—still, living, hedgerows, where

The bushes close, and clasp above, and keep

Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel;—

But my soul saddens when it looks beyond;

I cannot be immortal, nor taste all.

O God! where does this tend—these struggling aims!

What would I have? what is this 'sleep,' which seems

To bound all? can there be a 'waking' point

Of crowning life? The soul would never rule—

It would be first in all things—it would have

Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that complete

Commanding for commanding sickens it. The last point that I can trace is, rest

beneath

Some better essence than itself—in weakness;

This is 'myself'—not what I think should be,

And what is that I hunger for but God?

My God, my God! let me for once look on thee

As tho' nought else existed: we alone. And as creation crumbles, my soul's

spark

Expands till I can say, 'Even from myself

I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love thee;

I do not plead my rapture in thy works For love of thee—or that I feel as one

Who cannot die—but there is that in me Which turns to thee, which loves, or which should love.'

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress?

Why have I laboured to put out my life? Is it not in my nature to adore,

And e'en for all my reason do I not Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him?—Now.

¹ Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment—mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre—celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait qu'ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce reniement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'apaise par degrés, ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur soi-même, et, par-dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit toute particulière de mon ami, rendent les changements presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu.—Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakespeare, de Raffaele, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est due bien plus à leur conception, qu'à leur mise en exécution... j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami—et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquiescer la seconde. Le mieux serait de brûler ceci; mais que faire?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'attendre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où l'on pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée que je ne sais pas parfaitement lui est peut-être aussi intelligible qu'à moi.

Can I forgo the trust that he loves me ?
Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-

eyed,
I have denied thee calmly—do I not
Pant when I read of thy consummate
deeds,

And burn to see thy calm, pure truths
out-flash

The brightest gleams of earth's philo-
sophy ?

Do I not shake to hear aught question
thee ? . . .

If I am erring save me, madden me,
Take from me powers, and pleasures—
let me die

Ages, so I see thee : I am knit round
As with a charm, by sin and lust and
pride,

Yet tho' my wandering dreams have
seen all shapes

Of strange delight, oft have I stood by
thee—

Have I been keeping lonely watch with
thee,

In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less—
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross—
Or witnessing thy bursting from the
tomb !

A mortal, sin's familiar friend doth here
Avow that he will give all earth's
reward

But to believe and humbly teach the
faith,

In suffering, and poverty, and shame,
Only believing he is not unloved . . .

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for
ever !

I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Deserting me : and old shades gathering
on ;

Yet while its last light waits, I would say
much.

And chiefly, I am glad that I have said
That love which I have ever felt for thee,
But seldom told ; our hearts so beat
together,

That speech is mockery, but when dark
hours come ;

And I feel sad ; and thou, sweet, deem'st
it strange ;

A sorrow moves me, thou canst not
remove,

Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which thro' thee I began, and which
I end,

Collecting the last gleams to strive to
tell

That I am thine, and more than ever
now—

That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink,
No less I feel that thou hast brought me
bliss,

And that I still may hope to win it back.
Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not
think all calm,

For wild dreams followed me, and bore
me off,

And all was indistinct. Ere one was
caught

Another glanced : so dazzled by my
wealth,

Knowing not which to leave nor which
to choose,

For all my thoughts so floated, nought
was fixed—

And then thou said'st, a perfect bard
was one

Who shadowed out the stages of all life,
And so thou badest me tell this my first
stage ;—

'Tis done ; and even now I feel all dim
the shift

Of thought. These are my last thoughts ;
I discern

Faintly immortal life, and truth, and
good.

And why thou must be mine is, that e'en
now,

In the dim hush of night—that I have
done—

With fears and sad forebodings : I look
thro'

And say, ' E'en at the last I have her
still,

With her delicious eyes as clear as
heaven,

When rain in a quick shower has beat
down mist,

And clouds float white in the sun like
broods of swans.'

How the blood lies upon her cheek, all
spread

As thinned by kisses ; only in her lips

It wells and pulses like a living thing,
 And her neck looks, like marble misted
 o'er
 With love-breath, a dear thing to kiss
 and love,
 Standing beneath me—looking out to
 me,
 As I might kill her and be loved for it.

 Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought
 but me ;
 Leave me not. All these words are wild
 and weak :
 Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped
 so low
 But to behold thee purer by my side,
 To show thou art my breath—my life—
 a last
 Resource—an extreme want: never
 believe
 Aught better could so look to thee, nor
 seek
 Again the world of good thoughts left
 for me.
 There were bright troops of undiscovered
 suns,
 Each equal in their radiant course.
 There were
 Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean
 kept
 For his own joy, and his waves broke on
 them
 Without a choice. And there was a
 dim crowd
 Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.
 And a star left his peers and came with
 peace
 Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for
 him.
 And one isle harboured a sea-beaten
 ship,
 And the crew wandered in its bowers,
 and plucked
 Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes
 for home.
 And one dream came to a pale poet's
 sleep,
 And he said, ' I am singled out by God,
 No sin must touch me.' I am very weak,
 But what I would express is,—Leave
 me not,
 Still sit by me—with beating breast, and
 hair

Loosened—watching earnest by my
 side,
 Turning my books, or kissing me when I
 Look up—like summer wind. Be still
 to me
 A key to music's mystery, when mind
 fails,
 A reason, a solution, and a clue.
 You see I have thrown off my prescribed
 rules :
 I hope in myself—and hope, and pant,
 and love—
 You'll find me better—know me more
 than when
 You loved me as I was. Smile not ;
 I have
 Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on
 you.

 No more of the past—I'll look within no
 more—
 I have too trusted to my own wild
 wants—
 Too trusted to myself—to intuition,
 Draining the wine alone in the still
 night,
 And seeing how—as gathering films
 arose,
 As by an inspiration life seemed bare
 And grinning in its vanity, and ends
 Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as
 fixed,
 And others suddenly became all foul,
 As a fair witch turned an old hag at
 night.
 No more of this—we will go hand in
 hand,
 I will go with thee, even as a child,
 Looking no further than thy sweet
 commands.
 And thou hast chosen where this life
 shall be—
 The land which gave me thee shall be
 our home,
 Where nature lies all wild amid her
 lakes
 And snow-swathed mountains, and vast
 pines all girt
 With ropes of snow—where nature lies
 all bare,
 Suffering none to view her but a race
 Most stunted and deformed—like the
 mute dwarfs

Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.
And there (the time being when the
heavens are thick

With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou
dost sing

Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,
Or telling me old stories of dead knights.
Or I will read old lays to thee—how
she,

The fair pale sister, went to her chill
grave

With power to love, and to be loved, and
live.

Or we will go together, like twin gods
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
Over the dead—to call and to awake—
Over the unshaped images which lie
Within my mind's cave—only leaving
all

That tells of the past doubts. So when
spring comes,

And sunshine comes again like an old
smile,

And the fresh waters, and awakened
birds,

And budding woods await us—I shall be
Prepared, and we will go and think
again,

And all old loves shall come to us—but
changed

As some sweet thought which harsh
words veiled before ;

Feeling God loves us, and that all that
errs

Is a strange dream which death will
dissipate ;

And then when I am firm we'll seek
again

My own land, and again I will approach
My old designs, and calmly look on all
The works of my past weakness, as one
views

Some scene where danger met him long
before.

Ah ! that such pleasant life should be
but dreamed !

But whate'er come of it—and tno' it
fade,

And tho' ere the cold morning all be
gone

As it will be ;—tho' music wait for me,

And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing
like sin,

Which steals back softly on a soul half
saved ;

And I be first to deny all, and despise
This verse, and these intents which seem
so fair :

Still this is all my own, this moment's
pride,

No less I make an end in perfect joy.
E'en in my brightest time, a lurking
fear

Possessed me. I well knew my weak
resolves,

I felt the witchery that makes mind
sleep

Over its treasures—as one half afraid
To make his riches definite—but now
These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
I shall not know again that nameless
care,

Lest leaving all undone in youth, some
new

And undreamed end reveal itself too
late :

For this song shall remain to tell forever,
That when I lost all hope of such
a change,

Suddenly Beauty rose on me again.

No less I make an end in perfect joy,
For I, having thus again been visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss
awaits,

And tho' this weak soul sink, and dark-
ness come,

Some little word shall light it up again,
And I shall see all clearer and love better ;
I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,
As one who has a right ; and I shall live
With poets—calmer—purer still each
time,

And beauteous shapes will come to me
again,

And unknown secrets will be trusted me,
Which were not mine when wavering—
but now

I shall be priest and lover, as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,
And love ; and as one just escaped from
death

Would bind himself in bands of friends
to feel

Helivesindeed—so, I would lean on thee;
 Thou must be ever with me—most in
 gloom
 When such shall come—but chiefly when
 I die,
 For I seem dying, as one going in the
 dark
 To fight a giant—and live thou for ever,
 And be to all what thou hast been to me—

All in whom this wakes pleasant
 thoughts of me,
 Know my last state is happy—free from
 doubt,
 Or touch of fear. Love me and wish
 me well !

RICHMOND,

October 22, 1832.

PARACELSUS

INSCRIBED TO
 AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR,
 BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

March 15th, 1835.

R.B.

PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELSUS, a student.

FESTUS and MICHAL, his friends.

APRILE, an Italian poet.

I. PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE, *Würzburg; a garden in the
 environs. 1512.*

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL.

Par. Come close to me, dear friends;
 still closer; thus !

Close to the heart which, though long
 time roll by

Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to
 yours,

As now it beats—perchance a long, long
 time—

At least henceforth your memories shall
 make

Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
 Nor shall my memory want a home in
 yours—

Alas, that it requires too well such free
 Forgiving love as shall embalm it there !
 For if you would remember me aright,
 As I was born to be, you must forget
 All fitful, strange and moody wayward-
 ness

Which e'er confused my better spirit, to
 dwell

Only on moments such as these, dear
 friends !

—My heart no truer, but my words and
 ways

More true to it : as Michal, some months
 hence,

Will say, ' this autumn was a pleasant
 time,'

For some few sunny days ; and over-
 look

Its bleak wind, hankering after pining
 leaves.

Autumn would fain be sunny ; I would
 look

Liker my nature's truth : and both are
 frail,

And both beloved, for all their frailty.

Mich. Aureole !

Par. Drop by drop ! she is weeping
 like a child !

Not so ! I am content—more than con-
 tent ;

Nay, autumn wins you best by this its
 mute

Appeal to sympathy for its decay :
 Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the
 less

Your stained and drooping vines their
grapes bow down,
Nor blame those creaking trees bent
with their fruit,
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth
among!

Then for the winds—what wind that
ever raved

Shall vex that ash which overlooks you
both,

So proud it wears its berries? Ah, at
length,

The old smile meet for her, the lady of
this

Sequestered nest!—this kingdom,
limited

Alone by one old populous green wall
Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,

Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick
spiders,

Each family of the silver-threaded
moss—

Which, look through near, this way, and
it appears

A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh
now!

Fancy the crickets, each one in his
house,

Looking out, wondering at the world—
or best,

Yon painted snail with his gay shell of
dew,

Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.

Mich. Intruth we have lived carelessly
and well.

Par. And shall, my perfect pair!—
each, trust me, born

For the other; nay, your very hair,
when mixed,

Is of one hue. For where save in this
nook

Shall you two walk, when I am far
away,

And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay:
that plant

Shall never wave its tangles lightly and
softly,

As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers,

but you

Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success! Ah, see, the sun
sinks broad

Behind Saint Saviour's: wholly gone,
at last!

Fest. Now, Aureole, stay those wan-
dering eyes awhile!

You are ours to-night at least; and
while you spoke

Of Michal and her tears, I thought that
none

Could willing leave what he so seemed
to love:

But that last look destroys my dream—
that look

As if, where'er you gazed, there stood
a star!

How far was Würzburg with its church
and spire

And garden-walls and all things they
contain,

From that look's far alighting?

Par. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy to see

The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my
lot,

That, when afar, my weary spirit,—
disposed

To lose awhile its care in soothing
thoughts

Of them, their pleasant features, looks
and words,—

Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached
them too,

Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
And fashion even a wish in their behalf

Beyond what they possess already here;
But, unobstructed, may at once forget

Itself in them, assured how well they
fare.

Beside, this Festus knows he holds me
one

Whom quiet and its charms arrest in
vain,

One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too filled with airy hopes to make

account

Of soft delights his own heart garners
up:

Whereas, behold how much our sense
of all

That 's beauteous proves alike ! When
Festus learns

That every common pleasure of the
world

Affects me as himself ; that I have just
As varied appetite for joy derived

From common things ; a stake in life,
in short,

Like his ; a stake which rash pursuit of
aims

That life affords not, would as soon
destroy ;—

He may convince himself that, this in
view,

I shall act well advised. And last,
because,

Though heaven and earth and all things
were at stake,

Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting
eve.

Fest. True: and the eve is deepening,
and we sit

As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could hint of it

As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful
town

At sun-dawn ; or could whisper it by
fits

(Trithemius busied with his class the
while)

In that dim chamber where the noon-
streaks peer

Half frightened by the awful tomes
around ;

Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
From even-blush to midnight : but, to-
morrow !

Have I full leave to tell my inmost
mind ?

We have been brothers, and henceforth
the world

Will rise between us :—all my freest
mind ?

'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !

Par. Oh, say on !
Devise some test of love, some arduous
feat

To be performed for you : say on ! If
night

Be spent the while, the better ! Recall
how oft

My wondrous plans and dreams and
hopes and fears

Have—never wearied you, oh, no !—as I
Recall, and never vividly as now,
Your true affection, born when Einsie-
deln

And its green hills were all the world to
us ;

And still increasing to this night which
ends

My further stay at Würzburg. Oh, one
day

You shall be very proud ! Say on, dear
friends !

Fest. In truth ? 'Tis for my proper
peace, indeed,

Rather than yours ; for vain all pro-
jects seem

To stay your course : I said my latest
hope

Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy dispatched to win

The favour of an eastern king, and
how

The gifts they offered proved but daz-
zling dust

Shed from the ore-beds native to his
clime.

Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far

than I

You seem to comprehend ; and yet de-
sist

No whit from projects where repose nor
love

Have part.

Par. Once more ? Alas ! as I fore-
bode.

Fest. A solitary briar the bank puts
forth

To save our swan's nest floating out to
sea.

Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is
it you wish ?

That I should lay aside my heart's pur-
suit,

Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission, and so

die !

You bid me listen for your true love's
sake :

Yet how has grown that love ? Even in
a long

And patient cherishing of the selfsame
spirit

It now would quell ; as though a mother
hoped

To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not
born

Informed and fearless from the first, but
shrank

From aught which marked me out apart
from men :

I would have lived their life, and died
their death,

Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny :

But you first guided me through doubt
and fear,

Taught me to know mankind and know
myself ;

And now that I am strong and full of
hope,

That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
Save those your earnest words made
plain to me,

Now that I touch the brink of my de-
sign,

When I would have a triumph in their
eyes,

A glad cheer in their voices—Michal
weeps,

And Festus ponders gravely !

Fest. When you deign
To hear my purpose . . .

Par. Hear it ? I can say
Beforehand all this evening's conference !
'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses :
first,

Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's
end,

And what God's will ; no two faiths e'er
agreed

As his with mine. Next, each of us
allows

Faith should be acted on as best we may ;
Accordingly, I venture to submit

My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to
authorize :

Well, he discerns much good in it, avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,

A danger here to be avoided, there
An oversight to be repaired : in fine

Our two minds go together—all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognize,

All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,

And nought forbids my looking up at
last

For some stray comfort in his cautious
brow.

When, lo ! I learn that, spite of all,
there lurks

Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my scheme ; so that at last

It all amounts to this—the sovereign
proof

That we devote ourselves to God, is
seen

In living just as though no God there
were ;

A life which, prompted by the sad and
blind

Folly of man, Festus abhors the most ;
But which these tenets sanctify at once,

Though to less subtle wits it seems the
same,

Consider it how they may.

Mich. Is it so, Festus ?
He speaks so calmly and kindly : is it
so ?

Par. Reject those glorious visions of
God's love

And man's design ; laugh loud that God
should send

Vast longings to direct us ; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust or gold ;

I know

The world's cry well, and how to answer
it !

But this ambiguous warfare . . .

Fest. . . . Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your
friend

To urge it ?—for his sake, not yours ? I
wish

To send my soul in good hopes after you ;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words

Erringly apprehended, a new creed
Ill understood, begot rash trust in you,

Had share in your undoing.

Par. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce : but meanwhile
blame me not

Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward,

nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.

Fest. Prove that to me—but that !
Prove, you abide

Within their warrant, nor presumptuous
boast

God's labour laid on you ; prove, all you
covet

A mortal may expect ; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect,
will lead

To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture
forth !

You smile ; but I had gathered from
slow thought—

Much musing on the fortunes of my
friend—

Matter I deemed could not be urged in
vain ;

But it all leaves me at my need: in
shreds

And fragments I must venture what
remains.

Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore
he should scorn . . .

Fest. Stay, Michal : Aurcole, I speak
guardedly

And gravely, knowing well, whate'er
your error,

This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.

Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long
since

Gave birth to, nourished, and at length
matures

This scheme. I will not speak of
Einsiedeln,

Where I was born your elder by some
years

Only to watch you fully from the first :
In all beside, our mutual tasks were
fixed

Even then—'twas mine to have you in
my view

As you had your own soul and those
intentions

Which filled it when, to crown your
dearest wish,

With a tumultuous heart, you left with
me

Our childhood's home to join the
favoured few

Whom, here, Trithemius condescends
to teach

A portion of his lore : and not one youth

Of those so favoured, whom you now
despise,

Came earnest as you came, resolved, like
you,

To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like
his.

Now, this new ardour which supplants
the old,

I watched, too ; 'twas significant and
strange,

In one matched to his soul's content at
length

With rivals in the search for wisdom's
prize,

To see the sudden pause, the total
change ;

From contest, the transition to repose—
From pressing onward as his fellows
pressed,

To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,

Once foiled, to leave betimes athrivelless
quest.

That careless bearing, free from all
pretence

Even of contempt for what it ceased to
seek—

Smiling humility, praising much, yet
waiving

What it professed to praise—though not
so well

Maintained but that rare outbreaks,
fierce and brief,

Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly
curbed.

That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,

I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to
spring

Upon his foe's throat ; but it was not
thus :

Not that way looked your brooding
purpose then.

For after-signs disclosed, what you con-
firmed,

That you prepared to task to the utter-
most

Your strength, in furtherance of a
certain aim

Which—while it bore the name your
rivals gave .

Their own most puny efforts—was so
vast

In scope that it included their best
flights,

Combined them, and desired to gain one
prize

In place of many,—the secret of the
world,

Of man, and man's true purpose, path,
and fate.

—That you, not nursing as a mere vague
dream

This purpose, with the sages of the Past,
Have struck upon a way to this, if all
You trust be true, which following,
heart and soul,

You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:
And that this aim shall differ from a
host

Of aims alike in character and kind,
Mostly in this,—that in itself alone,
Shall its reward be, not an alien end
Blending therewith; no hope, nor fear,
nor joy,

Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but
this pure

Devotion to sustain you or betray:
Thus you aspire.

Par. You shall not state it thus:
I should not differ from the dreamy crew
You speak of. I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than this
My ready answer to the will of God
Who summons me to be His organ. All
Whose innate strength supports them
shall succeed

No better than your sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you; and 'tis doubt-
less need

That He appoint no less the way of
praise

Than the desire to praise; for, though
I hold

With you, the setting forth such praise
to be

The natural end and service of a man,
And hold such praise is best attained
when man

Attains the general welfare of his kind—
Yet, this, the end, is not the instrument.
Presume not to serve God apart from
such

Appointed channel as He wills shall
gather

Imperfect tributes, for that sole obe-
dience

Valued, perchance. He seeks not that
His altars

Blaze, careless how, so that they do but
blaze.

Suppose this, then; that God selected
you

To know (heed well your answers, for
my faith

Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
I cannot think you dare annex to such
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
An intense hope; nor let your gifts
create

Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
Conducive to success, make destiny
Dispense with man's endeavour. Now,
dare you search

Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction, than security
Of its existence? whether you discern
The path to the fulfilment of your pur-
pose

Clear as that purpose—and again, that
purpose

Clear as your yearning to be singled out
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this?

Par. [After a pause.] No, I have nought
to fear! Who will may know

The secret'st workings of my soul.
What though

It be so?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me?—if splendour
break

Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What
fairer seal

Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy?—this instinct
striving

Because its nature is to strive?—enticed
By the security of no broad course,
Without success forever in its eyes!
How know I else such glorious fate my
own,

But in the restless irresistible force
That works within me? Is it for human
will

To institute such impulses?—still less,

To disregard their promptings ? What
 should I
 Do, kept among you all ; your loves,
 your cares,
 Your life—all to be mine ? Be sure that
 God
 Ne'er dooms to waste the strength He
 deigns impart !
 Ask the gier-eagle why she stoops at
 once
 Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
 What full-grown power informs her
 from the first,
 Why she not marvels, strenuously
 beating
 The silent boundless regions of the
 sky !
 Be sure they sleep not whom God needs !
 Nor fear
 Their holding light His charge, when
 every hour
 That finds that charge delayed, is a new
 death.
 This for the faith in which I trust ; and
 hence
 I can abjure so well the idle arts
 These pedants strive to learn and teach ;
 Black Arts,
 Great Works, the Secret and Sublime,
 forsooth—
 Let others prize : too intimate a tie
 Connects me with our God ! A sullen
 fiend
 To do my bidding, fallen and hateful
 sprites
 To help me—what are these, at best,
 beside
 God helping, God directing everywhere,
 So that the earth shall yield her secrets
 up,
 And every object there be charged to
 strike,
 Teach, gratify her master God appoints?
 And I am young, my Festus, happy and
 free !
 I can devote myself ; I have a life
 To give ; I, singled out for this, the One!
 Think, think ; the wide East, where all
 Wisdom sprung ;
 The bright South, where she dwelt ; the
 hopeful North,
 All are passed o'er—it lights on me !
 'Tis time

New hopes should animate the world,
 new light
 Should dawn from new revealings to a
 race
 Weighed down so long, forgotten so
 long ; thus shall
 The heaven reserved for us, at last
 receive
 Creatures whom no unwonted splen-
 dours blind,
 But ardent to confront the unclouded
 blaze
 Whose beams not seldom blessed their
 pilgrimage,
 Not seldom glorified their life below.
 Fest. My words have their old fate
 and make faint stand
 Against your glowing periods. Call
 this, truth—
 Why not pursue it in a vast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example ? — seeking
 there
 Calm converse with the great dead, soul
 to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like intent
 —So lift yourself into their airy place,
 And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
 Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
 Pronounced inextricable, true !—but
 left
 Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh
 hand,
 Might do much at their vigour's waning-
 point ;
 Succeeding with new-breathed and un-
 tired force,
 As at old games a runner snatched the
 torch
 From runner still : this way success
 might be.
 But you have coupled with your enter-
 prise,
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 Of seeking it in strange and untried
 paths.
 What books are in the desert ? writes
 the sea
 The secret of her yearning in vast caves
 Where yours will fall the first of human
 feet ?
 Has Wisdom sat there and recorded
 aught

You press to read ? Why turn aside
 from her
 To visit, where her vesture never
 glanced,
 Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
 By God's decree, which who shall dare
 impugn ?
 Now—ruins where she paused but would
 not stay,
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
 She called an endless curse on, so it
 came :
 Or, worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
 Ignoblest troops that never heard her
 voice,
 Or hate it, men without one gift from
 Rome
 Or Athens, — these shall Aureole's
 teachers be !
 Rejecting past example, practice, pre-
 cept,
 Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand
 alone :
 Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
 Your rivals throng, the sages : here
 stand you !
 What'er you may protest, knowledge
 is not
 Paramount in your love ; or for her sake
 You would collect all help from every
 source—
 Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would
 merge
 In the broad class of those who showed
 her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.
Par. What shall I say ?
 Festus, from childhood I have been
 possessed
 By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or
 fierce,
 As from without some master, so it
 seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current : this
 but ill
 Expresses what I would convey : but
 rather
 I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
 Than that my soul's own workings, own
 high nature,
 So became manifest. I knew not then
 What whispered in the evening, and
 spoke out

At midnight. If some mortal, born too
 soon,
 Were laid away in some great trance—
 the ages
 Coming and going all the while—till
 dawned
 His true time's advent ; and could then
 record
 The words they spoke who kept watch
 by his bed,—
 Then I might tell more of the breath so
 light
 Upon my eyelids, and the fingers warm
 Among my hair. Youth is confused ;
 yet never
 So dull was I but, when that spirit
 passed,
 I turned to him, scarce consciously, as
 turns
 A water-snake when fairies cross his
 sleep.
 And having this within me and about
 me
 While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes
 and woods
 Confined me—what oppressive joy was
 mine
 When life grew plain, and I first viewed
 the thronged,
 The everlasting concourse of mankind !
 Believe that ere I joined them, ere I
 knew
 The purpose of the pageant, or the place
 Consigned me in its ranks—while, just
 awake,
 Wonder was freshest and delight most
 pure—
 'Twas then that least supportable ap-
 peared
 Astation with the brightest of the crowd,
 A portion with the proudest of them all.
 And from the tumult in my breast, this
 only
 Could I collect, that I must thenceforth
 die,
 Or elevate myself far, far above
 The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to
 long
 At once to trample on, yet save man-
 kind,
 To make some unexampled sacrifice
 In their behalf, to wring some wondrous
 good

From heaven or earth for them, to
perish, winning
Eternal weal in the act : as who should
dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its
cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged
on him,
No storm might threaten summer's
azure sleep :
Yet never to be mixed with men so
much
As to have part even in my own work,
share
In my own largess. Once the feat
achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious
praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse
thanks.
Like some knight traversing a wilder-
ness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a
tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe ;
When all the swarthy race press round
to kiss
His feet, and choose him for their king,
and yield
Their poor tents, pitched among the
sand-hills, for
His realm : and he points, smiling, to
his scarf
Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet
Gay set with twinkling stones—and to
the East,
Where these must be displayed !
Fest. Good : let us hear
No more about your nature, ' which
first shrank
From all that marked you out apart
from men ! '
Par. I touch on that ; these words
but analyse
The first mad impulse : 'twas as brief as
fond,
For as I gazed again upon the show,
I soon distinguished here and there a
shape
Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead
and full eye.
Well pleased was I their state should
thus at once

Interpret my own thoughts :—' Behold
the clue
To all,' I rashly said, ' and what I pine
To do, these have accomplished : we
are peers.
They know, and therefore rule : I, too,
will know ! '
You were beside me, Festus, as you
say ;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits
whom fame
Is lavish to attest the lords of mind ;
Not pausing to make sure the prize in
view
Would satiate my cravings when ob-
tained,
But since they strove I strove. Then
came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired
alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim
counts
A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong
Or staggered only at his own vast wits ;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would
slur over
That struggle ; suffice it, that I loathed
myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt
somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking
shape
Within me ; and this lasted till one
night
When, as I sat revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said—' Seest
thou not,
Desponding child, whence spring defeat
and loss ?
Even from thy strength. Consider :
hast thou gazed
Presumptuously on Wisdom's counte-
nance,
No veil between ; and can thy faltering
hands
Unguided by thy brain the sight ab-
sorb
Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
Whom radiance ne'er distracted ? Live
their life
If thou wouldst share their fortune,
choose their eyes

Unfed by splendour. Let each task
 present
 Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy
 gifts
 In profitless waiting for the gods'
 descent,
 But have some idol of thine own to dress
 With their array. Know, not for
 knowing's sake,
 But to become a star to men for ever.
 Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it
 brings,
 The wonder it inspires, the love it
 breeds.
 Look one step onward, and secure that
 step.
 And I smiled as one never smiles but
 once;
 Then first discovering my own aim's
 extent,
 Which sought to comprehend the works
 of God,
 And God himself, and all God's inter-
 course
 With the human mind; I understood,
 no less,
 My fellows' studies, whose true worth
 I saw,
 But smiled not, well aware Who stood
 by me.
 And softer came the voice—' There is a
 way :
 'Tis hard for flesh to tread therein,
 imbued
 With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence
 first
 Have ripened inborn germs of sin to
 strength :
 Wilt thou adventure for my sake and
 man's,
 Apart from all reward ? ' And last it
 breathed—
 ' Be happy, my good soldier ; I am by
 thee,
 Be sure, even to the end ! '—I answered
 not,
 Knowing Him. As he spoke, I was
 endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast will;
 And when He ceased, my brow was
 sealed His own.
 If there took place no special change in
 me,

How comes it all things wore a different
 hue
 Thenceforward ?—pregnant with vast
 consequence,
 Teeming with grand results, loaded with
 fate ?
 So that when quailing at the mighty
 range
 Of secret truths which yearn for birth,
 I haste
 To contemplate undazzled some one
 truth,
 Its bearings and effects alone—at once
 What was a speck expands into a star,
 Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
 Till I near craze. I go to prove my soul !
 I see my way as birds their trackless way.
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit
 first,
 I ask not : but unless God send His hail
 Or blinding fire-balls, sleet or stifling
 snow,
 In some time, His good time, I shall
 arrive :
 He guides me and the bird. In His
 good time !
Mich. Vex him no further, Festus ;
 it is so !
Fest. Just thus you help me ever.
 This would hold
 Were it the trackless air, and not a path
 Inviting you, distinct with footprints
 yet
 Of many a mighty marcher gone that
 way.
 You may have purer views than theirs,
 perhaps,
 But they were famous in their day—the
 proofs
 Remain. At least accept the light they
 lend.
Par. Their light ! the sum of all is
 briefly this ;
 They laboured and grew famous, and
 the fruits
 Are best seen in a dark and groaning
 earth
 Given over to a blind and endless
 strife
 With evils, what of all their lore abates ?
 No ; I reject and spurn them utterly
 And all they teach. Shall I still sit
 beside

Their dry wells, with a white lip and
filmed eye,
While in the distance, heaven is blue
above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned
tarns ?

Fest. And yet
As strong delusions have prevailed ere
now.

Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin. I have heard of such :
yourself

Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.

Mich. Nay, Festus, when but as the
pilgrims faint

Through the drear way, do you expect
to see

Their city dawn amid the clouds afar ?

Par. Ay, sounds it not like some old
well-known tale ?

For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths.

Perchance
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
Ages ago ; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest,
so

Instinct with better light let in by death,
That life was blotted out—not so com-
pletely

But scattered wrecks enough of it
remain,

Dim memories, as now, when seems once
more

The goal in sight again. All which,
indeed,

Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I
wear,

The earth I tread, are not more clear to
me

Than my belief, explained to you or no.

Fest. And who am I, to challenge and
dispute

That clear belief ? I will divest all
fear.

Mich. Then Aureole is God's com-
missary ! he shall

Be great and grand—and all for us !

Par. No, Sweet !
Not great and grand. If I can serve
mankind

'Tis well ; but there our intercourse
must end :

I never will be served by those I serve.

Fest. Look well to this ; here is a
plague-spot, here,

Disguise it how you may ! 'Tis true, you
utter

This scorn while by our side and loving
us ;

'Tis but a spot as yet : but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.

How can that course be safe which from
the first

Produces carelessness to human love ?
It seems you have abjured the helps

which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would
do,

Have humbly sought ; I dare not
thoroughly probe

This matter, lest I learn too much. Let
be,

That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval

Reward you ; put reward aside ; alone
You shall go forth upon your arduous

task,
None shall assist you, none partake your

toil,
None share your triumph : still you
must retain

Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like
you,

I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows ; it should seem

Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause

their own:
They should ward off fate's envy—the
great gift,

Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.

If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze

reproach !
Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when all
alone,

Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I ! And
you ?

Do you not feel this ? Say that you feel
this !

Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims,
at length
Allowed their weight, should be sup-
posed to need
A further strengthening in these goodly
helps !
My course allures for its own sake—its
sole
Intrinsic worth ; and ne'er shall boat of
mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at
once.
Your sages say, ' if human, therefore
weak : '
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit ; and by its side, all
else . . .
No matter ! I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own.
Would there were some real sacrifice to
make !
Your friends the sages threw their joys
away,
While I must be content with keeping
mine.
Fest. But do not cut yourself from
human weal !
You cannot thrive—a man that dares
affect
To spend his life in service to his kind,
For no reward of theirs, nor bound to
them
By any tie ; nor do so, Aureole ! No—
There are strange punishments for such.
Give up
(Although no visible good flow thence)
some part
Of the glory to another ; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for your-
self.
Say, say almost to God—' I have done
all
For her, not for myself ! '

Par. And who, but lately,
Was to rejoice in my success like you ?
Whom should I love but both of you ?

Fest. I know not :
But know this, you, that 'tis no will of
mine
You should abjure the lofty claims you
make ;
And this the cause—I can no longer
seek

To overlook the truth, that there would
be

A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the
trees :

—A being knowing not what love is.
Hear me !

You are endowed with faculties which
bear

Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensa-
tion

To summon meaner spirits to do their
will,

And gather round them at their need ;
inspiring

Such with a love themselves can never
feel,

Passionless 'mid their passionate vo-
taries.

I know not if you joy in this or no,
Or ever dream that common men can live
On objects you prize lightly, but which
make

Their heart's sole treasure : the affec-
tions seem

Beauteous at most to you, which we
must taste

Or die : and this strange quality accords,
I know not how, with you ; sits well
upon

That luminous brow, though in another
it scowls

An eating brand, a shame. I dare not
judge you.

The rules of right and wrong thus set
aside,

There's no alternative—I own you one
Of higher order, under other laws

Than bind us ; therefore, curb not one
bold glance !

'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with
us all . . .

Mich. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast
those hopes away,

And stay with us ! An angel warns me,
too,

Man should be humble ; you are very
proud :

And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues
for such !

—Warns me to have in dread no quick
repulse,

No slow defeat, but a complete success :

You will find all you seek, and perish so!

Par. [after a pause.] Are these the barren firstfruits of my quest?

Is love like this the natural lot of all?

How many years of pain might one such hour

O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,

What shall I say, if not that I desire

To justify your love; and will, dear friends,

In swerving nothing from my first resolves.

See, the great moon! and ere the mottled owls

Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems

You acquiesce at last in all save this—

If I am like to compass what I seek

By the untried career I choose; and then.

If that career, making but small account

Of much of life's delight, will yet retain

Sufficient to sustain my soul—for thus

I understand these fond fears just expressed.

And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,

The labours and the precepts of old time, I have not lightly disesteemed. But,

friends, Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise

From outward things, whate'er you may believe.

There is an inmost centre in us all, Where truth abides in fulness; and

around Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,

This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.

A baffling and perverting carnal mesh Blinds it, and makes all error: and, 'to know'

Rather consists in opening out a way Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,

Than in effecting entry for a light Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly

The demonstration of a truth, its birth, And you trace back the effluence to its spring

And source within us; where broods radiance vast,

To be elicited ray by ray, as chance Shall favour: chance—for hitherto,

your sage Even as he knows not how those beams

are born, As little knows he what unlocks their

fount. And men have oft grown old among

their books To die, case-hardened in their ignorance,

Whose careless youth had promised what long years

Of unremitted labour ne'er performed: While, contrary, it has chanced some

idle day To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free

As the midgets in the sun, gives birth at last

To truth—produced mysteriously as cape

Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.

Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,

The lowest as the highest? some slight film

The interposing bar which binds a soul And makes the idiot, just as makes the

sage Some film removed, the happy outlet

whence Truth issues proudly? See this soul of

ours! How it strives weakly in the child, is

loosed In manhood, clogged by sickness, back

compelled By age and waste, set free at last by

death: Why is it, flesh enthrals it or enthrones?

What is this flesh we have to penetrate?

Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth

And power emerge, but also when strange chance

Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,

When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,

Excess, or languor—oftenest death's approach,

Peril, deep joy, or woe. One man shall
crawl

Through life, surrounded with all
stirring things,

Unmoved—and he goes mad ; and from
the wreck

Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he
hid.

Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the
flesh

Accels the spirit ! We may not be
doomed

To cope with seraphs, but at least the
rest

Shall cope with us. Make no more
giants, God,

But elevate the race at once ! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our
human strength,

All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-
hearted—

See if we cannot beat the angels yet !
Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there
dispersed

About the world, long lost or never
found.

And why should I be sad, or lorn of
hope ?

Why ever make man's good distinct
from God's ?

Or, finding they are one, why dare
mistrust ?

Who shall succeed if not one pledged
like me ?

Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from His, like those who set them-
selves

To find the nature of the spirit they
bore,

And, taught betimes that all their
gorgeous dreams

Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to its narrow
sphere,

But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast
desires,—

And all a dream ! Thus was life scorned ;
but life

Shall yet be crowned : twine amaranth !
I am priest !

And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence, parting with a youth
Like theirs who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust ! And
though I spurn

All adventitious aims, from empty
praise

To love's award, yet whoso deems such
helps

Important, and concerns himself for
me,

May know even these will follow with
the rest—

As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous
ore.

My own affections, laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone

By all I have achieved. Till then—till
then . . .

Ah ! the time-wiling loitering of a page
Through bower and over lawn, till eve
shall bring

The stately lady's presence whom he
loves—

The broken sleep of the fisher whose
rough coat

Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are
faint types !

See, see they look on me : I triumph
now !

But one thing, Festus, Michal ! I have
told

All I shall e'er disclose to mortal : say—
Do you believe I shall accomplish this ?

Fest. I do believe !

Mich. I ever did believe !

Par. Those words shall never fade
from out my brain !

This earnest of the end shall never fade !
Are there not, Festus, are there not,
dear Michal,

Two points in the adventure of the
diver :

One—when, a beggar, he prepares to
plunge,

One—when, a prince, he rises with his
pearl ?

Festus, I plunge !

Fest. We wait you when you rise !

II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE, *Constantinople; the House of a Greek conjurer.* 1521.

PARACELSUS.

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,

With all that length of domes and minarets,

Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs

Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.

There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight. 'Tis done at last!

Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat

Have won me to this act! 'Tis as yon cloud

Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many a mountain-top

And break upon a molehill. I have dared

Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once

The heights already reached, without regard

To the extent above; fairly compute

All I have clearly gained; for once excluding

A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes—

And all, because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much,

Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,

Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
Make up the sum: and here, amid the scrawled

Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac, lie my life's results!

A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many lands

And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together

Confusedly massed as when acquired;
he was

Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinize the little gained: the whole

Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber

And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
A whole life,—and my life! Nothing to do,

No problem for the fancy, but a life
Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this

Remembrancer set down concerning 'life'?

"Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream."

It is the echo of time; and he whose heart

Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech

Was copied from a human tongue, can never

Recall when he was living yet knew not this.

Nevertheless long seasons pass o'er him
Till some one hour's experience shows what nothing.

It seemed, could clearer show; and ever after,

An altered brow and eye and gait and speech

Attest that now he knows the adage true

"Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream."

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour

As well as any: now, let my time be!

Now! I can go no farther; well or ill,
'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance.

I cannot keep on the stretch; 'tis no back-shrinking—

For let but some assurance beam, some close

To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
At any price, though closing it, I die.

Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true: 'I shall not quit
His chamber till I know what I desire!' Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea?
An end, a rest! strange how the notion, once
Encountered, gathers strength by moments! Rest!
Where has it kept so long? this throbbing brow
To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease! To dare let down
My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve
My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place!
My portion, my reward, even my failure, Assigned, made sure for ever! To lose myself
Among the common creatures of the world,
To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length!
Even in failure, rest! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped that once!
What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all
Been undergone for this? This the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
Slightly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes; nay, were it now
My sole concern to exculpate myself,
Ead things or mend them,—why, I could not choose
A humbler mood to wait for the event!
No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task;
The rest is God's concern; mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held

By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-courts so far
That he deserves at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them; behold,
He bares his front: a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms!
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,
Both well! What's failure or success to me?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordained it; there alone I spy,
No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.
Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vows,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was formed
To rear, should wither; but foreseeing not
The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not; yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,
If not love, say, like love: there was a time

When yet this wolfish hunger after
knowledge
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.
This heart was human once, or why
recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Würzburg, which
the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an
arm ?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his
praise
And counsel and grave fears—where is
he now
With the sweet maiden, long ago his
bride ?

I surely loved them—that last night, at
least,

When we . . . gone ! gone ! the better.
I am saved

The sad review of an ambitious youth
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their
birth,

But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have
gone

Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such
lusts.

I have made life consist of one idea :
Ere that was master, up till that was
born,

I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure ; till one
morn

I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to
tell

Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on
earth.

And since that morn all life has been
forgotten ;

All is one day, one only step between
The outset and the end : one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
One vast unbroken chain of thought,
kept up

Through a career apparently adverse
To its existence : life, death, light and
shadow,

The shows of the world, were bare
receptacles

Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight :

A wondrous natural robe in which she
went.

For some one truth would dimly beacon
me

From mountains rough with pines, and
flit and wink

O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and
tremble

Into assured light in some branching
mine

Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid
gold—

And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe ;

I see the robe now—then I saw the form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,

So much is good, then, in this working
sea

Which parts me from that happy strip
of land :

But o'er that happy strip a sun shone,
too !

And fainter gleams it as the waves grow
rough,

And still more faint as the sea widens ;
last

I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with
light

From its own putrefying depths alone.
Then, God was pledged to take me by

the hand ;

Now, any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length :

God may take pleasure in confounding
pride

By hiding secrets with the scorned and
base—

I am here, in short : so little have I
paused

Throughout. I never glanced behind to
know

If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am !

Oh, bitter ; very bitter !

And more bitter,
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,
Plague beneath plague, the last turning
the first

To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
 My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
 In tears which burn ! Would I were sure to win
 Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture
 Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
 Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
 To opal shafts !—only that, hurling it
 Indignant back, I might convince myself
 My aims remained supreme and pure as ever !
 Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
 That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
 That, though I sink, another may succeed ?
 O God, the despicable heart of us !
 Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart !
 'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
 Single rewards, and ask them in the lump ;
 At all events, once launched, to hold straight on :
 For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
 Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
 Full consummation ! As a man, you had
 A certain share of strength ; and that is gone
 Already in the getting these you boast.
 Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
 'Great master, we are here indeed, dragged forth
 To light ; this hast thou done : be glad !
 Now, seek
 The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting !'
 And yet 'tis much, surely 'tis very much,
 Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
 To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
 Arrived with inexhaustible light ; and lo,

I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not !
 And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
 And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after all,
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?
 Knowledge it seemed, and Power, and Recompense !
 Was she who glided through my room of nights,
 Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed
 The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
 When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
 God ! was I fighting Sleep off for Death's sake ?
 God ! Thou art Mind ! Unto the Master-Mind
 Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone !
 All else I will endure ; if, as I stand
 Here, with my gains, Thy thunder smite me down,
 I bow me ; 'tis Thy will, Thy righteous will ;
 I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die ;
 And if no trace of my career remain
 Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
 In these bright chambers level with the air,
 See Thou to it ! But if my spirit fail,
 My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
 Hast Thou done well by me ? So do not
 Thou !
 Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed !
 Hold me before the frequency of Thy seraphs
 And say—'I crushed him, lest he should disturb
 My law. Men must not know their strength : behold,
 Weak and alone, how he had raised himself !'
 But if delusions trouble me, and Thou,
 Not seldom felt with rapture in Thy help

Throughout my toils and wanderings,
dost intend

To work man's welfare through my
weak endeavour,

To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From Thine own blinding crown, to
smile, and guide

This puny hand, and let the work so
wrought

Be styled my work,—hear me ! I covet
not

An influx of new power, an angel's soul :
It were no marvel then—but I have
reached

Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a
man !

Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith, but only one !
That I may cover with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain
way

To mould them, and completing them,
possess !

Yet God is good : I started sure of that,
And why dispute it now ? I'll not
believe

But some undoubted warning long ere
this

Had reached me : a fire-labour was
not deemed

Too much for the old founder of these
walls.

Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous : yet, till late,
my course

So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
Could find no place in it. True, I am
worn ;

But who clothes summer, who is Life
itself ?

God, that created all things, can renew !
And then, though after-life to please me
now

Must have no likeness to the past, what
hinders

Reward from springing out of toil, as
changed

As bursts the flower from earth and root
and stalk ?

What use were punishment, unless some
sin

Be first detected ? let me know that
first !

No man could ever offend as I have
done . . .

[*A voice from within.*]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard

Long ago, but all too low,

So that scarce a care it stirred

If the voice was real or no :

I heard it in my youth when first

The waters of my life outburst :

But now their stream ebbs faint, I hear

That voice, still low but fatal-clear—

As if all Poets, God ever meant
Should save the world, and therefore
lent

Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused

To do His work, or lightly used

Those gifts, or failed through weak
endeavour,

So, mourn cast off by Him for ever,—

As if these leaned in airy ring

To take me ; this the song they sing.

' Lost, lost ! yet come,

With our van troop make thy home.

Come, come ! for we

Will not breathe, so much as breathe

Reproach to thee !

Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.

So sank we in those old years,

We who bid thee, come ! thou last

Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast,

And altogether we, thy peers,

Will pardon ask for thee, the last

Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast

With those who watch but work no
more,

Who gaze on life but live no more.

Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak

The message which our lips, too weak,

Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem

Our fault : such trust, and all a dream !

Yet we chose thee a birthplace

Where the richness ran to flowers ;

Couldst not sing one song for grace ?

Not make one blossom man's and ours :

Must one more recreant to his race

Die with unexerted powers,

And join us, leaving as he found

The world, he was to loosen, bound ?

Anguish ! ever and for ever ;

Still beginning, ending never !

Yet, lost and last one, come !
 How couldst understand, alas,
 What our pale ghosts strove to say,
 As their shades did glance and pass
 Before thee, night and day ?
 Thou wast blind as we were dumb :
 Once more, therefore, come, O come !
 How shall we clothe, how arm the spirit
 Who next shall thy post of life inherit—
 How guard him from thy speedy ruin ?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not
 save !

APRILE enters.

Ha, ha ! our king that wouldst be, here
 at last ?

Art thou the Poet who shall save the
 world ?

Thy hand to mine. Stay, fix thine
 eyes on mine.

Thou wouldst be king ? Still fix thine
 eyes on mine !

Par. Ha, ha ! why crouchest not ?
 Am I not king ?

So torture is not wholly unavailing !
 Have my fierce spasms compelled thee
 from thy lair ?

Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,
 Myself of after-time, my very self
 With sight a little clearer, strength more
 firm,

Who robes him in my robe and grasps
 my crown

For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect ?
 I scarcely trusted God with the sur-
 mise

That such might come, and thou didst
 hear the while !

Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine ;
 my hair

Is soft, nay silken soft : to talk with thee
 Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-
 pale.

Truly, thou hast laboured, hast with-
 stood her lips,

The siren's ! Yes, 'tis like thou hast
 attained !

Tell me, dear master, wherefore now
 thou comest ?

I thought thy solemn songs would have
 their need

In after-time ; that I should hear the
 earth

Exult in thee, and echo with thy praise,
 While I was laid forgotten in my grave.

Par. Ah, fiend, I know thee, I am not
 thy dupe !

Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
 Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap

The harvest sown by sages passed away.
 Thou art the sober searcher, cautious

striver,
 As if, except through me, thou hadst
 searched or striven !

Ay, tell the world ! Degrade me, after
 all,

To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
 To all but envy of thy fate, be sure !

Apr. Nay, sing them to me ; I shall
 envy not :

Thou shalt be king ! Sing thou, and I
 will sit

Beside, and call deep silence for thy
 songs,

And worship thee, as I had ne'er been
 meant

To fill thy throne : but none shall ever
 know !

Sing to me ; for already thy wild eyes
 Unlock my heart-springs, as some crys-
 tal-shaft

Reveals by some chance blaze its parent
 fount

After long time : so thou reveal'st my
 soul.

All will flash forth at last, with thee to
 hear !

Par. (His secret ! I shall get his
 secret—fool !)

I am he that aspired to know : and
 thou ?

Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be
 loved !

Par. Poor slave ! I am thy king
 indeed.

Apr. Thou deem'st

That—born a spirit, dowered even as
 thou,

Born for thy fate—because I could not
 curb

My yearnings to possess at once the full
 Enjoyment, but neglected all the means

Of realizing even the frailest joy,
Gathering no fragments to appease my
want,

Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe,
sure march

O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumph-
ing,

Neglecting nought below for aught
above,

Despising nothing and ensuring all—
Nor that I could (my time to come again)
Lead thus my spirit securely as thine
own.

Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee
well.

I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost! lost!

O ye who armed me at such cost,
How shall I look on all of ye
With your gifts even yet on me?

Par. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck
creature after all!

Such fond fools as are like to haunt this
den:

They spread contagion, doubtless: yet
he seemed

To echo one foreboding of my heart
So truly, that . . . no matter! How he
stands

With eve's last sunbeam staying on his
hair

Which turns to it, as if they were akin:
And those clear smiling eyes of saddest
blue

Nearly set free, so far they rise above
The painful fruitless striving of the brow
And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-
set

In slow despondency's eternal sigh!
Has he, too, missed life's end, and
learned the cause?)

I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm!
Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what
I am.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be
loved.

First: I would carve in stone, or cast in
brass,

The forms of earth. No ancient hunter
lifted

Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph
Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland
tree

Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-
king

Regal for his white locks; no youth who
stands

Silent and very calm amid the throng,
His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
Until the tyrant pass; no lawgiver,
No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid
oils,

Given by a god for love of her—too hard!
Every passion sprung from man, con-
ceived by man,

Would I express and clothe it in its right
form,

Or blend with others struggling in one
form,

Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty
spirit

With a fit frame to execute its will—
Even unconsciously to work its will—
You should be moved no less beside
some strong,

Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
Endeavouring to subdue it and inform
it

With its own splendour! All this I would
do:

And I would say, this done, 'His sprites
created,

God grants to each a sphere to be its
world,

Appointed with the various objects
needed

To satisfy its own peculiar wants;
So, I create a world for these my shapes
Fit to sustain their beauty and their
strength!'

And, at the word, I would contrive and
paint

Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells,
sands and wastes,

Lakes which, when morn breaks on their
quivering bed,

Blaze like a wyvern flying round the
sun,

And ocean-isles so small, the dog-fish
tracking

A dead whale, who should find them,
would swim thrice

Around them, and fare onward—all to
hold

The offspring of my brain. Nor these
alone :

Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and
crypt,

Baths, galleries, courts, temples and
terraces,

Marts, theatres and wharfs—all filled
with men !

Men everywhere ! And this performed
in turn,

When those who looked on, pined to
hear the hopes

And fears and hates and loves which
moved the crowd,

I would throw down the pencil as the
chisel,

And I would speak ; no thought which
ever stirred

A human breast should be untold ; all
passions,

All soft emotions, from the turbulent
stir

Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired
lids

Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside
well :

And this in language as the need should
be,

Now poured at once forth in a burning
flow,

Now piled up in a grand array of words.
This done, to perfect and consummate
all,

Even as a luminous haze links star to
star,

I would supply all chasms with music,
breathing

Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.

Last, having thus revealed all I could
love,

Having received all love bestowed on it,
I would die : preserving so throughout
my course

God full on me, as I was full on men :

He would approve my prayer, ' I have
gone through

The loveliness of life ; create for me
If not for men, or take me to Thyself,
Eternal, infinite Love ! '

If thou hast ne'er

Conceived this mighty aim, this full
desire,

Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou
art

No king of mine.

Par. Ah me !

Apr. But thou art here !

Thou didst not gaze like me upon that
end

Till thine own powers for compassing
the bliss

Were blind with glory ; nor grow mad
to grasp

At once the prize long patient toil should
claim,

Nor spurn all granted short of that.
And I

Would do as thou, a second time : nay,
listen !

Knowing ourselves, our world, our task
so great,

Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we
refuse

The means so limited, the tools so
rude

To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and leave our task
undone.

We will be wise in time : what though
our work

Be fashioned in despite of their ill-
service,

Be crippled every way ? 'Twere little
praise

Did full resources wait on our goodwill
At every turn. Let all be as it is.

Some say the earth is even so con-
trived

That tree and flower, a vesture gay,
conceal

A bare and skeleton framework. Had
we means

Answering to our mind ! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear
thereon

My palace ? Branching palms the props
shall be,

Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the
East ;

Who heeds them ? I can pass them.
Serpents' scales,

And painted birds' down, furs and
fishes' skins

Must help me; and a little here and there

Is all I can aspire to: still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler
clime.

'Had I green jars of malachite, this way
I'd range them: where those sea-shells
glisten above,

Cressets should hang, by right: this
way we set

The purple carpets, as these mats are
laid,

Woven of fern and rush and blossoming
flag.'

Or if, by fortune, some completer grace
Be spared to me, some fragment, some
slight sample

Of the prouder workmanship my own
home boasts,

Some trifle little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection—with what
joy

Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach!
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels, one word of the fiat of
God,

To let my followers know what such
things are!

I would adventure nobly for their sakes:
When nights were still, and still, the
moaning sea,

And far away I could descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand
once more

At home, and load my bark, and hasten
back,

And fling my gains to them, worthless
or true—

'Friends,' I would say, 'I went far, far
for them,

Past the high rocks the haunt of doves,
the mounds

Of red earth from whose sides strange
trees grow out,

Past tracts of milk-white minute
blinding sand,

Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
Gathered these magic herbs, berry and
bud,

In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,
But happy plucking them at any price.

To me, who have seen them bloom in
their own soil,

They are scarce lovely: plait and wear
them, you!

And guess, from what they are, the
springs that fed them,

The stars that sparkled o'er them, night
by night,

The snakes that travelled far to sip their
dew!

Thus for my higher loves; and thus even
weakness

Would win me honour. But not these
alone

Should claim my care; for common life,
its wants

And ways, would I set forth in beauteous
hues:

The lowest hind should not possess a
hope,

A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
Than he his own heart's language.

I would live
For ever in the thoughts I thus ex-
plored,

As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds; they should be mine

henceforth,
Imbued with me, though free to all
before:

For clay, once cast into my soul's rich
mine

Should come up crusted o'er with gems.
Nor this

Would need a meaner spirit, than the
first;

Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit,
clothed

In humbler guise, but still the selfsame
spirit:

As one spring wind unbinds the moun-
tain snow

And comforts violets in their hermitage.
But, master, poet, who hast done all

this,
How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming

me?

Didst thou, when nerving thee to this
attempt,

Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some
wide hall,

Dazzled by shapes that filled its length
with light,

Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,
 That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
 Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
 Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
 By thee for ever, bright to thy despair ?
 Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
 Resolve to single out one, though the rest
 Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
 In beauty, to the world ; forgetting, so,
 Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power ?
 And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced
 By memories and regrets and passionate love,
 To glance once more farewell ? and did their eyes
 Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
 Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
 And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
 Could tempt thee to forsake them ? Or when years
 Had passed and still their love possessed thee wholly,
 When from without some murmur startled thee
 Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
 Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
 Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells
 And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
 Thy early mission, long ago renounced,
 And, to that end, select some shape once more ?
 And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
 Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long
 Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
 As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads

A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm ?
 Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall ;
 Say, I was tempted sorely : say but this,
 Dear lord, Aprile's lord !
Par. Clasp me not thus,
 Aprile ! That the truth should reach me thus !
 We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint !
Apr. My king ! and envious thoughts could outrage thee !
 Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
 In thy success, as thou ! Let our God's praise
 Go bravely through the world at last !
 What care
 Through me or thee ? I feel thy breath.
 Why, tears ?
 Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me ?
Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
 To love ; and, merciful God, forgive us both !
 We wake at length from weary dreams ; but both
 Have slept in fairy-land : though dark and drear
 Appears the world before us, we no less
 Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
 I, too, have sought to know as thou to LOVE—
 Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power.
 We wake :
 What penance canst devise for both of us ?
Apr. I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness ! Even
 Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew : I speak,
 And now I die. But I have seen thy face !
 O, poet, think of me, and sing of me !
 But to have seen thee and to die so soon !
Par. Die not, Aprile ! We must never part.
 Are we not halves of one dissevered world,

Whom this strange chance unites once more ? Part never !

Till thou, the lover, know ; and I, the knower,

Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear !

We will accept our gains, and use them—now !

God, he will die upon my breast ! Aprile !

Apr. To speak but once, and die ! yet by his side.

Hush ! hush !

Ha ! go you ever girt about With phantoms, powers ? I have created such,

But these seem real as I ?

Par. Whom can you see Through the accursed darkness ?

Apr. Stay ; I know, I know them : who should know them well as I ?

White brows, lit up with glory ; poets all !

Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward !

Apr. Yes ; I see now. God is the PERFECT POET,

Whoin His person acts His own creations. Had you but told me this at first ! Hush ! hush !

Par. Live ! for my sake, because of my great sin, To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words

And their deep import. Live ! 'tis not too late.

I have a quiet home for us, and friends. Michal shall smile on you. Hear you ?

Lean thus, And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one word

Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile !

Apr. No, no. Crown me ? I am not one of you !

'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.

Par. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile ! Let me love !

I have attained, and now I may depart.

III. PARACELSUS.

SCENE, *Basil ; a chamber in the house of Paracelsus.* 1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. Heap logs, and let the blaze laugh out !

Fest. True, true. 'Tis very fit all, time and chance and change

Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face

And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,

Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred

By your long absence, should be cast away,

Forgotten in this glad unhop'd renewal Of our affections.

Par. Oh, omit not aught Which witnesses your own and Michal's own

Affection : spare not that ! Only forget The honours and the glories and what not,

It pleases you to tell profusely out.

Fest. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive :

The wondrous Paracelsus, Life's dispenser,

Fate's commissary, idol of the schools And courts, shall be no more than

Aureole still, Still Aureole and my friend, as when we parted

Some twenty years ago, and I restrained As best I could the promptings of my

spirit Which secretly advanced you, from the first,

To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own

Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing, Has won for you.

Par. Yes, yes. And Michal's face Still wears that quiet and peculiar light

Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl ?

Fest. Just so.

Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,

Though saintly, was not sad; for she
would sing

Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-
like,

Not dreaming you are near? Her carols
dropt

In flakes through that old leafy bower
built under

The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her
lattice

Among the trees above, while I, un-
seen,

Sat conning some rare scroll from
Tritheim's shelves,

Much wondering notes so simple could
divert

My mind from study. Those were happy
days.

Respect all such as sing when all alone!
Fest. Scarcely alone: her children,

you may guess,
Are wild beside her.

Par. Ah, those children quite
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:

A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct.
No change, no change! Not but this

added grace
May blend and harmonize with its

compeers,
And Michal may become her mother-

hood;
But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,

And most a change in aught I loved long
since.

So, Michal—you have said she thinks of
me?

Fest. O very proud will Michal be of
you!

Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering, shaping your

presumed
Adventure, or devising its reward;

Shutting out fear with all the strength
of hope.

For it was strange how, even when most
secure

In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all; it

seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,

A sense of something wanting, incom-
plete—

Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided

By mute consent—but, said or unsaid,
felt

To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out

the fears—
How you would laugh should I recount

them now!
I still predicted your return at last,

With gifts beyond the greatest of them
all,

All Tritheim's wondrous troop; did one
of which

Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,
As well aware of who would prove his

peer.
Michal was sure some woman, long ere

this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had

loved . . .
Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so

much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams

Of a raw, restless boy!
Fest. Oh, no: the sunrise

Well warranted our faith in this full
noon!

Can I forget the anxious voice which
said,

'Festus, have thoughts like these e'er
shaped themselves

In other brains than mine? have their
possessors

Existed in like circumstance? were they
weak

As I, or ever constant from the first,
Despising youth's allurements and

rejecting
As spider-films the shackles I endure?

Is there hope for me?'—and I
answered gravely

As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
More gifted mortal. O you must

remember,
For all your glorious . . .

Par. Glorious? ay, this hair,
These hands—nay, touch them, they are

mine! Recall
With all the said recallings, times when

thus
To lay them by your own ne'er turned

you pale
As now. Most glorious, are they not?

Fest. Why—why—

Something must be subtracted from success

So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
Who should object such drawbacks.
Still, still, Aureole,
You are changed, very changed ! 'Twere losing nothing
To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won
need.

Par. My friend! you seek my pleasure,
past a doubt:
You will best gain your point, by talking,
not
Of me, but of yourself.

Fest. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children?
Sure

You know, by this, full well how
Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick
brown hair;
And Aureole's glee when some stray
gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small
hope
Have I that he will honour (the wild
imp)

His namesake ! Sigh not ! 'tis too much
to ask
That all we love should reach the same
proud fate.

But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame your-
self

To tranquil pleasures, must at heart
despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let
out by Death,
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
And I am Death's familiar, as you know.
I helped a man to die, some few weeks
since,
Warped even from his go-cart to one
end—

The living on princes' smiles, reflected
from
A mighty herd of favourites. No mean
trick

He left untried, and truly well-nigh
wormed

All traces of God's finger out of him:
Then died, grown old. And just an hour
before,

Having lain long with blank and soulless
eyes,

He sat up suddenly, and with natural
voice

Said that in spite of thick air and closed
doors

God told him it was June; and he knew
well,

Without such telling, harebells grew in
June;

And all that kings could ever give or
take

Would not be precious as those blooms
to him.

Just so, allowing I am passing sage,
It seems to me much worthier argument
Why pansies¹, eyes that laugh, bear
beauty's prize

From violets, eyes that dream—(your
Michal's choice)—

Than all fools find to wonder at in me,
Or in my fortunes. And be very sure
I say this from no prurient restlessness,
No self-complacency, itching to turn,
Vary, and view its pleasure from all
points,

And, in this instance, willing other men
Should be at pains, demonstrate to
itself

The realness of the very joy it tastes.
What should delight me like the news of
friends

Whose memories were a solace to me
oft,

As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their
flight?

Offer than you had wasted thought on
me

Had you been wise, and rightly valued
bliss!

But there's no taming nor repressing
hearts:

God knows I need such !—So, you
heard me speak?

Fest. Speak? when?

Par. When but this
morning at my class?

¹ Citrinula (flamula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris. DORN.

There was noise and crowd enough.

I saw you not.

Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here ?—that 'tis part of my
proud fate

To lecture to as many thick-skulled
youths

As please, each day, to throng the
theatre,

To my great reputation, and no small
Danger of Basil's benches, long unused
To crack beneath such honour ?

Fest. I was there ;

I mingled with the throng : shall I avow
Small care was mine to listen ?—too
intent

On gathering from the murmurs of the
crowd

A full corroboration of my hopes !

What can I learn about your powers ?
but they

Know, care for nought beyond your
actual state,

Your actual value ; yet they worship you,
Those various natures whom you sway
as one !

But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . .

Par. Stop, o' God's name : the
thing 's by no means yet

Past remedy ! Shall I read this morning's
labour

—At least in substance ? Nought so
worth the gaining

As an apt scholar ! Thus then, with all
due

Precision and emphasis—you, besides,
are clearly

Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
The subject than your stool—allowed
to be

A notable advantage.

Fest. Surely, Aureole,

You laugh at me !

Par. I laugh ? Ha, ha !

thank heaven,

I charge you, if 't be so ! for I forget
Much, and what laughter should be like !

No less,

However, I forego that luxury
Since it alarms the friend who brings it
back.

True, laughter like my own must echo
strangely

To thinking men ; a smile were better
far ;

So, make me smile ! If the exulting look
You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so
long

Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles
are born

Alone of hearts like yours, or herds-
men's souls

Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as
their flocks,

Saw in the stars mere garnishry of
heaven,

In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.

Never change, Festus : I say, never
change !

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after
all !

Par. When last we parted, Festus,
you declared,

—Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered
words

I have preserved. She told me she
believed

I should succeed (meaning, that in the
search

I then engaged in, I should meet success),
And yet be wretched : now, she augured
false.

Fest. Thank Heaven ! but you spoke
strangely : could I venture

To think bare apprehension lest your
friend,

Dazzled by your resplendent course,
might find

Henceforth less sweetness in his own,
awakes

Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not,
dear friend,

That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
Your lot was not my own !

Par. And this, for ever !

For ever ! gull who may, they will be
gulled !

They will not look nor think ; 'tis
nothing new

In them : but surely he is not of them !
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned,

you—

Though all beside were sand-blind—
you, my friend,

Would look at me, once close, with
piercing eye

Untroubled by the false glare that confounds

A weaker vision ; would remain serene,
Though singular, amid a gaping throng.
I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,

To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute ! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
I have vowed long ago my worshippers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
All further information, good or bad.
Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching me

Be fixed much longer ; for it seems to spell

Dimly the characters a simpler man
Might read distinct enough. Old eastern books

Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space

Remained unchanged in semblance ; nay, his brow

Was hued with triumph : every spirit then

Praising, *his* heart on flame the while :— a tale !

Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray ?
Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else

Were raised supreme ?

Par. Good : I do well, most well !
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves

With what 'tis past their power to comprehend ?

I should not strive now : only, having nursed

The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,

One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
Of shallow plausibilities alone ;

One who, in youth found wise enough to choose

The happiness his riper years approve,
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,

That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad

And ruinous course, the converse of his own,

His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him

The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
And warned the weak one in such tender words,

Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—

That oft their memory comforted that friend

When it by right should have increased despair :

—Having believed, I say, that this one man

Could never lose the light thus from the first

His portion—how should I refuse to grieve

At even my gain if it disturb our old Relation, if it make me out more wise ?

Therefore, once more reminding him how well

He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That spoils his prophet's title. In plain words,

You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—

I have not been successful, and yet am Most miserable ; 'tis said at last ; nor you

Give credit, lest you force me to concede
That common sense yet lives upon the world.

Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me ?

Par. You know, or—if you have been wise enough

To cleanse your memory of such matters—knew,

As far as words of mine could make it clear,

That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief

Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
Or plot or whatsoever it was ; rejoicing

Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
Sorrowing then only when mischance retarded

Its progress. That was in those Würzburg days !

Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,

I have pursued this plan with all my strength ;

And having failed therein most signally,
Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
As all-excelling would have been the
prize

Had fortune favoured me. I scarce
have right

To vex your frank good spirit, late so
glad

In my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.
But mine is no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
My solitary luxury, my one friend :
Accordingly I venture to put off

The wearisome vest of falsehood galling
me,

Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend!
Not that he needs retain his aspect
grave ;

That answers not my purpose ; for 'tis
like,

Some sunny morning—Basil being
drained

Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with
learned clerks,

Here Oecolampadius, looking worlds of
wit,

Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all
squeezed,

And staring,—that the zany of the show,
Even Paracelsus, shall put off before
them

His trappings with a grace but seldom
judged

Expedient in such cases :—the grim
smile

That will go round ! Is it not therefore
best

To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way ? Where are the signs
I seek,

The first-fruits and fair sample of the
scorn

Due to all quacks ? Why, this will
never do !

Fest. These are foul vapours, Aureole ;
nought beside !

The effect of watching, study, weariness.

Were there a spark of truth in the con-
fusion

Of these wild words, you would not out-
rage thus

Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er
regard

These wanderings, bred of faintness and
much study.

'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble
to me,

To Michal's friend.

Par. I have said it, dearest Festus !
For the manner, 'tis ungracious,
probably ;

You may have it told in broken sobs,
one day,

And scalding tears, ere long : but I
thought best

To keep that off as long as possible.

Do you wonder still ?

Fest. No ; it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any
work,

Shall rise from it with eye so worn, that
he

Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone,
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary
too,

May clearly scan the little he effects :
But we, the bystanders, untouched by
toil,

Estimate each aright.

Par. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last ! 'Tis so with all !
First, they set down all progress as a
dream ;

And next, when he, whose quick dis-
comfiture

Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career,—

behold,
They look for every inch of ground to
vanish

Beneath his tread, so sure they spy
success !

Fest. Few doubtful steps ? when
death retires before

Your presence—when the noblest of
mankind,

Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their
vigour, raise

The shattered frame to pristine stateliness ?

When men in racking pain may purchase dreams

Of what delights them most, swooning at once

Into a sea of bliss, or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light ?
When we may look to you as one ordained

To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees

Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul ?

When . . .

Par. When and where, the devil, did you get

This notable news ?

Fest. Even from the common voice ;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute

The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Par. Folly ? Why not
To magic, pray ? You find a comfort doubtless

In holding, God ne'er troubles Him about

Us or our doings : once we were judged worth

The devil's tempting . . . I offend : forgive me,

And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole

Was fair enough as prophesyings go ;
At fault a little in detail, but quite

Precise enough in the main ; and here-upon

I pay due homage : you guessed long ago
(The prophet !) I should fail—and I have failed.

Fest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed

Your youth have not been realized as yet ?

Some obstacle has barred them hitherto ?
Or that their innate . . .

Par. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little matter

Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,

Safe and secure from all ambitious fools ;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn :
I fail.

And now methinks 'twere best to change a theme,

I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost ;

But there are times when patience proves at fault,

As now : this morning's strange encounter—you

Beside me once again ! you, whom I guessed

Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)

No friend have I among the saints at peace,

To judge by any good their prayers effect—

I knew you would have helped me !—
Why not He,

My strange competitor in enterprise,
Bound for the same end by another path,
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close ?

How goes it with April ? Ah, they miss
Your lone, sad, sunny idleness of Heaven,

Our martyrs for the world's sake ;
Heaven shuts fast :

The poor mad poet is howling by this time !

Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,

I could not quite repress the varied feelings

This meeting wakens ; they have had their vent,

And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still

Hang like a fret-work on the gate (or what

In my time was a gate) fronting the road

From Einsiedeln to Lachen ?

Fest. Trifle not :
Answer me, for my sake alone. You smiled

Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy

Yourself, might blot the else so bright
 result ;
 Yet if your motives have continued pure,
 Your will unfaltering, and in spite of
 this,
 You have experienced a defeat, why,
 then
 I say not, you would cheerfully with-
 draw
 From contest—mortal hearts are not so
 fashioned—
 But surely you would, ne'ertheless,
 withdraw.
 You sought not fame, nor gain, nor even
 love ;
 No end distinct from knowledge,—I
 repeat
 Your very words : once satisfied that
 knowledge
 Is a mere dream, you would announce
 as much,
 Yourself the first. But how is the event ?
 You are defeated—and I find you here !
Par. As though ' here ' did not signify
 defeat !
 I spoke not of my little labours here,
 But of the break-down of my general
 aims :
 For you, aware of their extent and scope,
 To look on these sage lecturings, ap-
 proved
 By beardless boys, and bearded dotards
 worse,
 As a fit consummation of such aims,
 Is worthy notice ! A professorship
 At Basil ! Since you see so much in it,
 And think my life was reasonably
 drained
 Of life's delights to render me a match
 For duties arduous as such post
 demands,—
 Far be it from me to deny my power
 To fill the petty circle lotted out
 Of infinite space, or justify the host
 Of honours thence accruing. So, take
 notice,
 This jewel dangling from my neck
 preserves
 The features of a prince, my skill restored
 To plague his people some few years to
 come :
 And all through a pure whim. He had
 eased the earth

For me, but that the droll despair which
 seized
 The vermin of his household, tickled me.
 I came to see. Here, drivelled the
 physician,
 Whose most infallible nostrum was at
 fault ;
 There quaked the astrologer, whose
 horoscope
 Had promised him interminable years ;
 Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's
 mouth
 With some undoubted relic—a sudary
 Of the Virgin ; while another piebald
 knave
 Of the same brotherhood (he loved them
 ever)
 Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
 Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
 Had stunk the patient dead ere he could
 groan.
 I cursed the doctor, and upset the
 brother ;
 Brushed past the conjurer ; vowed that
 the first gust
 Of stench from the ingredients just
 alight
 Would raise a cross-grained devil in my
 sword,
 Not easily laid : and ere an hour, the
 prince
 Slept as he never slept since prince he
 was.
 A day—and I was posting for my life,
 Placarded through the town as one
 whose spite
 Had near availed to stop the blessed
 effects
 Of the doctor's nostrum, which, well
 seconded
 By the sudary, and most by the costly
 smoke—
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers
 sent up
 Hard by, in the abbey—raised the prince
 to life ;
 To the great reputation of the seer
 Who, confident, expected all along
 The glad event—the doctor's recom-
 pense—
 Much largess from his highness to the
 monks—
 And the vast solace of his loving people,

Whose general satisfaction to increase,
The prince was pleased no longer to
defer

The burning of some dozen heretics,
Remanded till God's mercy should be
shown

Touching his sickness : last of all were
joined

Ample directions to all loyal folk
To swell the complement, by seizing me
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—
had endeavoured

To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
The prince's cure, and frustrate Heaven
by help

Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
By luck, the prince in his first fit of
thanks

Had forced this bauble on me as an
earnest

Of further favours. This one case may
serve

To give sufficient taste of many such,
So let them pass. Those shelves support a
pile

Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles,
From Germany, France, Spain, and
Italy ;

They authorize some honour ; ne'ertheless,

I set more store by this Erasmus sent ;
He trusts me ; our Frobenius is his
friend,

And him ' I raised ' (nay, read it) ' from
the dead.'

I weary you, I see. I merely sought
To show, there's no great wonder after
all

That while I fill the class-room, and
attract

A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay ;
And therefore need not scruple to accept
The utmost they can offer—if I please :

For 'tis but right the world should be
prepared

To treat with favour 'en fantastic wants
Of one like me, used up in serving her.
Just as the mortal, whom the gods in
part

Devoured, received in place of his lost
limb

Some virtue or other—cured disease,
I think ;

You mind the fables we have read to-
gether.

Fest. You do not think I comprehend
a word.

The time was, Aureole, you were apt
enough

To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious
breath ;

But surely you must feel how vague and
strange

These speeches sound.

Par. Well, then : you
know my hopes ;

I am assured, at length, those hopes
were vain ;

That truth is just as far from me as
ever ;

That I have thrown my life away ; that
sorrow

On that account is idle, and further
effort

To mend and patch what's marred
beyond repairing,

As useless : and all this was taught to
me

By the convincing, good old-fashioned
method

Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that
plain ?

Fest. Dear Aureole ! can it be my
fears were just ?

God wills not . . .

Par. Now, 'tis this I most admire—
The constant talk men of your stamp
keep up

Of God's will, as they style it ; one would
swear

Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
And see the will in question character'd
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise
to moot

Such topics : doubts are many and
faith is weak.

I know as much of any will of God's,
As knows some dumb and tortured
brute what Man,

His stern lord, wills from the perplexing
blows

That plague him every way ; but there,
of course,

Where least he suffers, longest he
remains—

My case ; and for such reasons I plod on,

Subdued, but not convinced. I know
as little

Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
Better things in my youth. I simply
know

I am no master here, but trained and
beaten

Into the path I tread ; and here I stay,
Until some further intimation reach me.
Like an obedient drudge. Though I
prefer

To view the whole thing as a task im-
posed,

Which, whether dull or pleasant, must
be done—

Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
Of joys which tastes less jaded might
affect ;

Nay, some which please me too, for all
my pride—

Pleasures that once were pains : the iron
ring

Festering about a slave's neck grows at
length

Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
A host of petty, vile delights, un-
dreamed of

Or spurned before ; such now supply
the place

Of my dead aims : as in the autumn
woods

Where tall trees used to flourish, from
their roots

Springs up a fungous brood, sickly and
pale,

Chill mushrooms, coloured like a corpse's
cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well your words.
I own

It troubles me but little that your aims,
Vast in their dawning, and most likely
grown

Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
Perchance I am glad ; you merit greater
praise ;

Because they are too glorious to be
gained,

You do not blindly cling to them and
die ;

You fell, but have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you

In wrestling, though the world holds not
your peer ;

And though too harsh and sudden is the
change

To yield content as yet, still you pursue
The ungracious path as though 'twere
rosy strewn.

'Tis well : and your reward, or soon or
late,

Will come from Him whom no man
serves in vain.

Par. Ah, very fine ! For my part,
I conceive

The very pausing from all further toil,
Which you find heinous, would be as
a seal

To the sincerity of all my deeds.
To be consistent I should die at once ;

I calculated on no after-life ;
Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know
not)

Here am I with as passionate regret
For youth and health and love so vainly
lavished,

As if their preservation had been first
And foremost in my thoughts ; and this
strange fact

Humbled me wondrously, and had due
force

In rendering me the less averse to follow
A certain counsel, a mysterious
warning—

You will not understand—but 'twas a
man

With aims not mine and yet pursued
like mine,

With the same fervour and no more
success,

Perishing in my sight ; who summoned
me

As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
To serve my race at once ; to wait no
longer

That God should interfere in my behalf,
But to distrust myself, put pride away,
And give my gains, imperfect as they
were,

To men. I have not leisure to explain
How since, a singular series of events

Has raised me to the station you behold,
Wherein I seem to turn to most account

The mere wreck of the Past,—perhaps
receive

Some feeble glimmering token that God
views

And may approve my penance : there-
fore here

You find me, doing most good or least
harm.

And if folks wonder much and profit
little

'Tis not my fault ; only, I shall rejoice

When my part in the farce is shuffled
through,

And the curtain falls : I must hold out
till then.

Fest. Till when, dear Aureolo ?

Par. Till I'm fairly thrust
From my proud eminence. Fortune is
fickle

And even professors fall : should that
arrive,

I see no sin in ceding to my bent.

You little fancy what rude shocks ap-
prise us

We sin : God's intimations rather fail

In clearness than in energy : 'twere well

Did they but indicate the course to take

Like that to be forsaken. I would fain

Be spared a further sample ! Here I
stand,

And here I stay, be sure, till forced to
flit.

Fest. Be you but firm on that head ;
long ere then

All I expect will come to pass, I trust :

The cloud that wraps you will have
disappeared.

Meantime, I see small chance of such
event :

They praise you here as one whose lore,
already

Divulged, eclipses all the Past can show,
But whose achievements, marvellous as

they be,

Are faint anticipations of a glory

About to be revealed. When Basil's
crowds

Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
That he depart.

Par. This favour at their hands
I look for earlier than your view of things

Would warrant. Of the crowd you
saw to-day,

Remove the full half sheer amazement
draws,

Mere novelty, nought else ; and next,
the tribe

Whose innate blockish dulness just per-
ceives

That unless miracles (as seem my works)

Be wrought in their behalf, their chance
is slight

To puzzle the devil ; next, the numerous
set

Who bitterly hate established schools,
and help

The teacher that oppugns them, till he
once

Have planted his own doctrine, when
the teacher

May reckon on their rancour in his turn ;

Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious
knaves

Whose cunning runs not counter to the
vogue,

But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing

To force my system to a premature

Short-lived development. Why swell
the list ?

Each has his end to serve, and his best
way

Of serving it : remove all these, remains

A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,

Worthy to look for sympathy and ser-
vice,

And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture :
still these few

Redeem their fellows. Once the germ
implanted,

Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Par. God grant it so !

I would make some amends : but if I
fail,

The luckless rogues have this excuse to
urge,

That much is in my method and my
manner,

My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,

Which hinders of reception and result

My doctrine : much to say, small skill
to speak !

Those old aims suffered not a looking-off,
Though for an instant ; therefore, only

when

I thus renounced them and resolved to
reap

Some present fruit—to teach mankind
some truth

So dearly purchased—only then I found

Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself ;

That to possess was one thing—to display,

Another. Had renown been in my thoughts,

Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it !

One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,

There needs no waiting fuller dispensation

To leave a labour to so little use.

Why not throw up the irksome charge at once ?

Par. A task, a task !

But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged

In the confessing vein ? Despite of all
My fine talk of obedience, and repugnance,

Docility, and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the task shall really be performed,

My inclinations free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated task I quit.

In plain words, I am spoiled : my life
still tends

As first it tended. I am broken and
trained

To my old habits ; they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling
ends

Are proved impossible : no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond fool,
as when

Their faint ghosts sit with me, and
flatter me,

And send me back content to my dull
round ?

How can I change this soul ?—this
apparatus

Constructed solely for their purposes
So well adapted to their every want,

To search out and discover, prove and
perfect ;

This intricate machine whose most
minute

And meanest motions have their charm
to me

Though to none else—an aptitude I
seize,

An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain,

And I alone :—how can I change my
soul ?

And this wronged body, worthless save
when tasked

Under that soul's dominion—used to
care

For its bright master's cares, and quite
subdue

Its proper cravings—no to ail nor pine,
So he but prosper—whither drag this

poor,
Tried, patient body ? God ! how I
essayed,

To live like that mad poet, for a while,
To love alone ! and how I felt too

warped
And twisted and deformed ! What
should I do,

Even tho' released from drudgery, but
return

Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and
sore,

To my old life—and die as I began !

I cannot feed on beauty, for the sake
Of beauty only ; nor can drink in balm

From lovely objects for their loveliness ;
My nature cannot lose her first imprint ;

I still must hoard and heap and class all
truths

With one ulterior purpose : I must
know !

Would God translate me to His throne,
believe

That I should only listen to His words
To further my own aims ! For other

men,
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,

And I were happy could I quench as
they

This mad and thriveless longing, and
content me

With beauty for itself alone : alas !
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail,

Yet may not join the troop of sacred
knights ;

And now the forest-creatures fly from
me,

The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams
warm no more.

Best follow, dreaming that ere night
arrive,

I shall o'ertake the company, and ride
Glittering as they !

Fest. I think I apprehend
What you would say : if you, in truth,
design

To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this conscious-
ness

Of failure is assumed.

Par. My friend, my friend,
I tell, you listen ; I explain, perhaps
You understand : there our communion
ends.

Have you learnt nothing from to-day's
discourse ?

When we would thoroughly know the
sick man's state

We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press
soft

The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay
bare

My heart, hideous and beating, or tear
up

My vitals for your gaze, ere you will
deem

Enough made known ? You ! who are
you, forsooth ?

That is the crowning operation claimed
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the
hall,

And earth the audience. Let Aprile
and you

Secure good places : 'twill be worth the
while.

Fest. Are you mad, Aureole ? What
can I have said

To call for this ? I judged from your
own words.

Par. Oh, doubtless ! A sick wretch
describes the ape

That mocks him from the bed-foot, and
all gravely

You thither turn at once : or he re-
counts

The perilous journey he has late per-
formed,

And you are puzzled much how that
could be !

You find me here, half stupid and half
mad ;

It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these things, much less to undergo
Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to
you :

And the event is, you combine, con-
trast,

And ponder on my foolish words, as
though

They thoroughly conveyed all hidden
here—

Here, loathsome with despair, and hate,
and rage !

Is there no fear, no shrinking or no
shame ?

Will you guess nothing ? will you spare
me nothing ?

Must I go deeper ? Ay or no ?

Fest. Dear friend . . .

Par. True : I am brutal—'tis a part
of it ;

The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-
haunter,

How should you know ? Well then, you
think it strange

I should profess to have failed utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return

To courses void of hope : and this,
because

You know not what temptation is, nor
how

'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.
You are to understand, that we who
make

Sport for the gods, are hunted to the
end :

There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt,

we slacken pace

And gather by the wayside herbs and
roots

To stanch our wounds, secure from
further harm :

We are assailed to life's extremest verge.
It will be well indeed if I return,

A harmless busy fool, to my old ways !
I would forget hints of another fate,

Significant enough, which silent hours
Have lately scared me with.

Fest. Another ! and what ?

Par. After all, Festus, you say well :
I am

A man yet : I need never humble me.

I would have been—something, I know
not what ;

But though I cannot soar, I do not
crawl.

There are worse portions than this one
of mine.

You say well !

Fest. Ah !

Par. And deeper degradation !
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
And vanity, should become the chosen
food

Of a sunk mind ; should stifle even the
wish

To find its early aspirations true ;
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like
life-breath—

An atmosphere of craft and trick and
lies ;

Should make it proud to emulate or
surpass

Base natures in the practices which
woke

Its most indignant loathing once . . .
No, no !

Utter damnation is reserved for Hell !
I had immortal feelings : such shall
never

Be wholly quenched : no, no !

My friend, you wear
A melancholy face, and, certain 'tis
There's little cheer in all this dismal
work.

But 'twas not my desire to set abroad
Such memories and forebodings : I
foresaw

Where they would drive. 'Twere better
to discuss

News of Lucerne or Zurich ; or to tell
Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-
groves.

Fest. I have thought : trust me, this
mood will pass away.

I know you, and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.

These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption : to be
mortal

Is to be plied with trials manifold.

Look round ! The obstacles which kept
the rest

From your ambition, have been spurned
by you ;

Their fears, their doubts, the chains
that bind them all,

Were flax before your resolute soul,
which nought

Avails to awe, save these delusions bred
From its own strength, its selfsame
strength disguised—

Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole !
Since

The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals
their cares,

And higher natures yet would slight and
laugh

At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
Measure your mind's height by the
shade it casts !

I know you.

Par. And I know you, dearest
Festus !

And how you love unworthily ; and how
All admiration renders blind.

Fest. You hold
That admiration blinds ?

Par. Ay and alas !

Fest. Nought blinds you less than
admiration will.

Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree ; from love which blends
with love—

Heart answering heart—to love which
spends itself

In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of
souls,

Which ne'er will know how well it is
adored.

I say, such love is never blind ; but
rather

Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate
(supposed

So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.
Love broods on such : what then ?

When first perceived,
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to
change,

To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they
disturb ?

—To make those very defects an endless
source

Of new affection grown from hopes and fears ?

And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand

Made even for much proved weak ? no shrinking-back

Lest, since all love assimilates the soul
To what it loves, it should at length become

Almost a rival of its idol ? Trust me,
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,

To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits

Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,

Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause ;

And least from those who hate, who most essay

By contumely and scorn to blot the light

Which forces entrance even to their hearts :

For thence will our defender tear the veil

And show within each heart, as in a shrine,

The giant image of Perfection, grown
In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned

In the untroubled presence of its eyes !
True admiration blinds not ; nor am I

So blind. I call your sin exceptional ;
It springs from one whose life has passed

the bounds
Prescribed to life. Compound that

fault with God !
I speak of men ; to common men like

me
The weakness you confess endears you

more,
Like the far traces of decay in suns.

I bid you have good cheer !

Par. Praeclarè ! Optimè !
Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest

Instructing Paracelsus ! yet, 'tis so.
Come, I will show you where my merit

lies.

'Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground
their expectation

Eventually to follow ; as the sea
Waits ages in its bed, 'till some one wave
Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet

perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine

Its fellows so long time : thenceforth
the rest,

Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad

If all my labours, failing of aught else,
Suffice to make such inroad and procure
A wider range for thought : nay, they do this ;

For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge

And a legitimate success, may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank

When classed with others : I precede
my age :

And whoso wills, is very free to mount
These labours as a platform, whence
their own

May have a prosperous outset. But,
alas !

My followers—they are noisy as you heard,

But for intelligence—the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply

And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and

pebble-stones
Would not do better service than my

arms
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall

Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half

learned.
Fest. I would supply that art, then,

and withhold
Its arms until you have taught their

mystery.
Par. Content you, 'tis my wish ;

I have recourse
To the simplest training. Day by day

I seek
To wake the mood, the spirit which

alone
Can make those arms of any use to men.

Of course, they are for swaggering forth
at once

Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield—

Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles !
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step !

A proper trick to scare the crows away !
Fest. Pity you choose not, then, some other method

Of coming at your point. The marvellous art

At length established in the world bids fair

To remedy all hindrances like these :
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore

Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners ; let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-times ;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect : sooner or later,
You shall be all-revealed.

Par. The old dull question
In a new form ; no more. Thus : I possess

Two sorts of knowledge ; one,—vast, shadowy,

Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued :

The other consists of many secrets, caught

While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few

Prime principles which may conduct to much :

These last I offer to my followers here.
Now bid me chronicle the first of these,

My ancient study, and in effect you bid me

Revert to the wild courses just abjured :
I must go find them scattered through the world.

Then, for the principles, they are so simple

(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound them

As any other—to-morrow at my class,
Or half a century hence embalmed in print.

For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to them,
And acting on them ; and I do not see

But that my lectures serve indifferent well :

No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,

For all their novelty and rugged setting.
I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aetius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
Serapion, Avicenna, Averroës,—
Were blocks !

Fest. And that reminds me, I heard something

About your waywardness : you burned their books,

It seems, instead of answering those sages.

Par. And who said that ?

Fest. Some I met yesternight
With Ecolampadius. As you know, the purpose

Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives sent

For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he

Apprised me that the famous teacher here

Was my old friend.

Par. Ah, I forgot : you went . . .

Fest. From Zurich with advices for the ear

Of Luther, now at Wittenburg—(you know,

I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius)—and returning sought

Basil and . . .

Par. I remember. Here's a case, now,

Will teach you why I answer not, but burn

The books you mention : pray, does Luther dream

His arguments convince by their own force

The crowds that own his doctrine ?
No, indeed :

His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was under

And heaven above them—points which chance or time

Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly
deny!

There is much breath-stopping, hair-
stiffening

Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute
awaiting

The thunderbolt which does not come;
and next,

Reproachful wonder and inquiry: those
Who else had never stirred, are able
now

To find the rest out for themselves—
perhaps

To outstrip him who set the whole at
work,

—As never will my wise class its in-
structor.

And you saw Luther?

Fest. 'Tis a wondrous soul!

Par. True: the so-heavy chain which
galled mankind

Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the
worker

Of our own project—we who long
before

Had burst our trammels, but forgot the
crowd,

We should have taught, still groaned
beneath the load:

This he has done and nobly. Speed
that may!

Whatever be my chance or my mis-
chance,

What benefits mankind must glad me
too:

And men seem made, though not as I
believed,

For something better than the times
produce.

Witness these gangs of peasants your
new lights

From Suabia have possessed, whom
Münzer leads,

And whom the duke, the landgrave, and
the elector

Will calm in blood! Well, well—'tis not
my world!

Fest. Hark!

Par. 'Tis the melancholy wind astir
Within the trees; the embers too are
grey:

Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the casement: see,
The night, late strewn with clouds and
flying stars,

Is blank and motionless: how peaceful
sleep

The tree-tops all together! Like an
asp,

The wind slips whispering from bough
to bough.

Par. Ay; you would gaze on a wind-
shaken tree

By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze:
Those happy times will come again.

Par. Gone, gone,
Those pleasant times! Does not the
moaning wind

Seem to bewail that we have gained
such gains

And bartered sleep for them?

Fest. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.

Par. Another world!
And why this world, this common world,
to be

A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair so-
ever,

To some fine life to come? Man must
be fed

With angel's food, forsooth; and some
few traces

Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant
him

In a supreme contempt of all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling
marks

Which constitute his essence, just as
truly

As here and there a gem would consti-
tute

The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.
But were it so—were man all mind—he
gains

A station little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,

Intelligence exists which casts our mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no:

Love, hope, fear, faith—these make
humanity;

These are its sign and note and character,

And these I have lost !—gone, shut from me for ever,
 Like a dead friend, safe from unkindness more !
 See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
 Diluted ; grey and clear without the stars ;
 The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves, as if
 Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
 His hold ; and from the East, fuller and fuller
 Day, like a mighty river, is flowing in ;
 But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.
 Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant,
 Half down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves,
 All thick and glistering with diamond dew.
 And you depart for Einsiedeln this day :
 And we have spent all night in talk like this !
 If you would have me better for your love,
 Revert no more to these sad themes.
Fest. One favour,
 And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved ;
 Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
 My friend has changed so sorely. If this mood
 Shall pass away, if light once more arise
 Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
 To hope, and trust again, and strive again,
 You will remember—not our love alone—
 But that my faith in God's desire that man
 Should trust on His support, (as I must think
 You trusted,) is obscured and dim through you ;
 For you are thus, and this is no reward.
 Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole ?

IV. PARACELSUS ASPIRES.

SCENE, *Colmar in Alsatia ; an Inn.*
 1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. [To JOHANNES OPORINUS, his secretary.] *Sic itur ad astra !* Dear Von Visenburg
 Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralysed,
 And every honest soul that Basil holds
 Aghast ; and yet we live, as one may say.
 Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
 So true a value on his sorry carcass,
 And learned Pütter had not frowned us dumb.
 We live ; and shall as surely start to-morrow
 For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy scathe
 To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
 A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
 I' th' shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good John—
 ' Basil ; a hot plague ravage it, and Pütter
 Oppose the plague ! ' Even so ? Do you too share
 Their panic, the reptiles ? Ha, ha ; faint through *them*,
 Desist for *them* ! They manage matters so
 At Basil 'tis like : but others may find means
 To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
 Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
 A stupid wonder in each fool again,
 Now big with admiration at the skill
 Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes ;
 And, that done,—means to brand each slavish brow
 So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
 That thenceforth flattery shall not pucker it
 Out of the furrow ; there that stamp shall stay
 To show the next they fawn on, what they are,

This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—

Whom I curse soul and limb. And now dispatch,

Dispatch, my trusty John; and what remains

To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip

Are yet to be completed, see you hasten This night; we'll weather the storm at least: to-morrow

For Nuremburg! Now leave us; this grave clerk

Has divers weighty matters for my ear: [OPORINUS goes out.

And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,

I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels

As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last May give a loose to my delight. How kind,

How very kind, my first, best, only friend!

Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me!

Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you shall live

Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,

And I—but let time show. Did you not wonder?

I sent to you because our compact weighed

Upon my conscience—(you recall the night

At Basil, which the gods confound!)—because

Once more I aspire. I call you to my side;

You come. You thought my message strange?

Fest. So strange That I must hope, indeed, your messenger

Has mingled his own fancies with the words

Purporting to be yours.

Par. He said no more, 'Tis probable, than the precious folks I leave

Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,

'Tis true! poor Paracelsus is exposed At last; a most egregious quack he proves:

And those he overreached must spit their hate

On one who, utterly beneath contempt, Could yet deceive their topping wits.

You heard Bare truth; and at my bidding you come here

To speed me on my enterprise, as once Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend!

Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole?

Par. Oh, for purpose, There is no lack of precedents in a case

Like mine; at least, if not precisely mine,

The case of men cast off by those they sought

To benefit.

Fest. They really cast you off?

I only heard a vague tale of some priest, Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,

Knowing his life's worth best; and how the judge

The matter was referred to, saw no cause

To interfere, nor you to hide your full Contempt of him; nor he, again, to smother

His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame

That Basil soon was made no place for you.

Par. The affair of Liechtenfels? the shallowest fable,

The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence!

I knew it, I foretold it from the first, How soon the stupid wonder you mistook

For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise

Of better things to come—would pall and pass;

And every word comes true. Saul is among

The prophets! Just so long as I was pleased

To play off the mere antics of my art, Fantastic gambols leading to no end,

I got hugo praise : but one can ne'er
 keep down
 Our foolish nature's weakness. There
 they flocked,
 Poor devils, jostling, swearing and
 perspiring,
 'Till the walls rang again ; and all for
 me !
 I had a kindness for them, which was
 right ;
 But then I stopped not till I tacked to
 that
 A trust in them and a respect—a sort
 Of sympathy for them : I must needs
 begin
 To teach them, not amaze them, 'to
 impart
 The spirit which should instigate the
 search
 Of truth,' just what you bade me ! I
 spoke out.
 Forthwith a mighty squadron, in dis-
 gust,
 Filed off—' the sifted chaff of the sack,'
 I said,
 Redoubling my endeavours to secure
 The rest. When lo ! one man had
 tarried so long
 Only to ascertain if I supported
 This tenet of his, or that ; another
 loved
 To hear impartially before he judged,
 And having heard, now judged ; this
 bland disciple
 Passed for my dupe, but all along, it
 seems,
 Spied error where his neighbours mar-
 velled most ;
 That fiery doctor who had hailed me
 friend,
 Did it because my by-paths, once
 proved wrong
 And beaconed properly, would com-
 mend again
 The good old ways our sires jogged
 safely o'er,
 Though not their squeamish sons ; the
 other worthy
 Discovered divers verses of St. John,
 Which, read successively, refreshed the
 soul,
 But, muttered backwards, cured the
 gout, the stone,

The colic, and what not. *Quid multa ?*
 The end
 Was a clear class-room, and a quiet
 leer
 From grave folk, and a sour reproachful
 glance
 From those in chief who, cap in hand,
 installed
 The new professor scarce a year before ;
 And a vast flourish about patient merit
 Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but
 sure
 Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
 Of which the example was some luckless
 wight
 Whom my arrival had discomfited,
 But now, it seems, the general voice
 recalled
 To fill my chair and so efface the stain '
 Basil had long incurred. I sought no
 better,
 Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
 And from my heart I wished them better
 suited
 And better served. Good night to
 Basil, then !
 But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
 Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare
 them
 The pleasure of a parting kick.
Fest. You smile :
 Despise them as they merit !
Par. If I smile,
 'Tis with as very contempt as ever
 turned
 Flesh into stone. This courteous
 recompense !
 This grateful . . . Festus, were your
 nature fit
 To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
 At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-
 blains,
 The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
 Which finds—a man, and leaves—a
 hideous thing
 That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
 —I would lay bare to you the human
 heart
 Which God cursed long ago, and devils
 make since
 Their pet nest and their never-tiring
 home.
 O, sages have discovered we are born

For various ends—to love, to know :
has ever

One stumbled, in his search, on any
signs

Of a nature in us formed to hate ? To
hate ?

If that be our true object which evokes
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure
'tis hate !

Yet men have doubted if the best and
bravest

Of spirits can nourish him with hate
alone.

I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems at Basil.

Fest. But your plans, your plans !
I have yet to learn your purpose,
Aureole !

Par. Whether to sink beneath such
ponderous shame,
To shrink up like a crushed snail, under-
go

In silence and desist from further toil
And so subside into a monument
Of one their censure blasted ? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
My old pretensions even as Basil dic-
tates,

To drop into the rank her wits assign me
And live as they prescribe and make that
use

Of my poor knowledge which their rules
allow,

Proud to be patted now and then, and
careful

To practise the true posture for receiving
The amplest benefit from their hoofs',
appliance

When they shall condescend to tutor
me ?

Then one may feel resentment like a
flame

Within, and deck false systems in truth's
garb,

And tangle and entwine mankind with
error,

And give them darkness for a dower and
falsehood

For a possession, ages : or one may
mope

Into a shade through thinking, or else
drowse

Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.

But I,—now Festus shall divine !—
but I

Am merely setting out once more, em-
bracing

My earliest aims again ! What thinks
he now ?

Fest. Your aims ? the aims ?—to
Know ? and where is found

The early trust . . .

Par. Nay, not so fast ; I say,
The aims—not the old means. You

know they made me
A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you

know
The when and the how : hardly those
means again !

Not but they had their beauty ; who
should know

Their passing beauty, if not I ? But
still

They were dreams, so let them vanish,
yet in beauty,

If that may be. Stay : thus they pass
in song ! [*He sings.*

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,

Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair : such balsam falls

Down seaside mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are

fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some
old

Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once un-
rolled ;

Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,

With moth and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,

As when a queen, long dead, was young.
Mine, every word ! And on such pile

shall die
My lovely fancies, with fair perished
things,

Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes, for-
gotten,

Or why abjure them ? So, I made this
rhyme

That fitting dignity might be preserved ;

No little proud was I ; though the list
of drugs

Smacks of my old vocation, and the
verse

Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

Fest. But, Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am
here—

Did you know all ! I have travelled far,
indeed,

To learn your wishes. Be yourself
again !

For in this mood I recognize you less

Than in the horrible despondency

I witnessed last. You may account
this, joy ;

But rather let me gaze on that despair
Than hear these incoherent words and
see

This flushed cheek and intensely-
sparkling eye.

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted
in my prime,

I am light-hearted now ; what would
you have ?

Aprile as a poet, I make songs—

'Tis the very augury of success I want !

Why should I not be joyous now as
then ?

Fest. Joyous ! and how ? and what
remains for joy ?

You have declared the ends (which I am
sick

Of naming) are impracticable.

Par. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-
fool !

Listen : my plan will please you not, 'tis
like,

But you are little versed in the world's
ways.

This is my plan—(first drinking its good
luck)—

I will accept all helps ; all I despised

So rashly at the outset, equally

With early impulses, late years have
quenched :

I have tried each way singly : now for
both !

All helps ! no one sort shall exclude the
rest.

I seek to know and to enjoy at once,

Not one without the other as before.

Suppose my labour should seem God's
own cause

Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall
not baulk me

Of the meanest, earthliest, sensualet
delight

That may be snatched ; for every joy is
gain,

And gain is gain, however small. My
soul

Can die then, nor be taunted—' what
was gained ? '

Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure
follow

As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt
communion

With the tumultuous Past, the teeming
Future,

Glorious with visions of a full success !

Fest. Success !

Par. And wherefore not ?
Why not prefer

Results obtained in my best state of
being,

To those derived alone from seasons
dark

As the thoughts they bred ? When I
was best, my youth

Unwasted, seemed success not surest
too ?

It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
I am-a wanderer : I remember well

One journey, how I feared the track was
missed,

So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar

Flashed through the circling clouds ;
you may conceive

My transport. Soon the vapours closed
again,

But I had seen the city, and one such
glance

No darkness could obscure : nor shall
the Present—

A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
Destroy the vivid memories of the Past.

I will fight the battle out !—a little
spent

Perhaps, but still an able combatant.

You look at my grey hair and furrowed
brow ?

But I can turn even weakness to account:

Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft !
What should I do with age ? So, sickness
lends

An aid ; it being, I fear, the source of all
We boast of : mind is nothing but
disease

And natural health is ignorance.

Fest. I see
But one good symptom in this notable
scheme.

I feared your sudden journey had in
view

To wreak immediate vengeance on your
foes ;

'Tis not so : I am glad.

Par. And if I please
To spit on them, to trample them, what
then ?

'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
Provoke it. I would spare their self-
conceit,

But if they must provoke me, cannot
suffer

Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
No quality in the shade, must needs put
forth

Power to match power, my strength
against their strength,

And teach them their own game with
their own arms—

Why, be it so and let them take their
chance !

I am above them like a God, there 's no
Hiding the fact : what idle scruples,
then,

Were those that ever bade me soften it,
Communicate it gently to the world,
Instead of proving my supremacy,
Taking my natural station o'er their
heads,

Then owning all the glory was a man's !
—And in my elevation man's would be.
But live and learn, though life's short,
learning, hard !

And therefore, though the wreck of my
past self,

I fear, dear Pütter, that your lecture-
room

Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
The penitent empiric, who set up

For somebody, but soon was taught his
place ;

Now, but too happy to be let confess
His error, snuff the candles, and illus-
trate

(*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)

Your medicine's soundness in his person.
Wait,

Good Pütter !

Fest. He who sneers thus, is a
God !

Par. Ay, ay, laugh at me ! I am very
glad

You are not gulled by all this swag-
gering ; you

Can see the root of the matter !—how
I strive

To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to bury and hide
My degradation in its length and
breadth ;

How the mean motives I would make
you think

Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow

May influence me as being mortal still—
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast sup-
plant

My youth's desires. You are no stupid
dupe :

You find me out ! Yes, I had sent for
you

To palm these childish lies upon you,
Festus !

Laugh—you shall laugh at me !

Fest. The Past, then, Aureole,
Proves nothing ? Is our interchange of
love

Yet to begin ? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that ? For
you,

Whate'er you say, there is no degrad-
ation ;

These low thoughts are no inmates of
your mind,

Or wherefore this disorder ? You are
vexed

As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they

Were troubled should your qualities
alight

Amid their murky souls : not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down

From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep calm though all night long the
famished troops
Snuff round and scratch against their
crazy huts.
These evil thoughts are monsters, and
will flee.

Par. May you be happy, Festus, my
own friend !

Fest. Nay, further ; the delights you
fain would think

The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimu-
lants.

Will ne'er content you . . .

Par. Hush ! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at
first

In our demands, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value ; but time passes
o'er,

And humbler spirits accept what we
refuse :

In short, when some such comfort is
doled out

As these delights, we cannot long retain
The bitter contempt which urges us at
first

To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly
earned :

I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains
through joy ;

Nor can I know, but straight warm tears
reveal

My need of linking also joy to know-
ledge :

So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of
course,

Confusedly ; this will better explain—
feel here !

Quick beating, is it not ?—a fire of the
heart

To work off some way, this as well as any.
So, Festus sees me fairly launched ; his
calm

Compassionate look might have dis-
turbed me once,

But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay my-
self

Open before him, and be soothed with
pity ;

I hope, if he command hope ; and
believe

As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love. And Festus
quits me

To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Para-
celsus

Has his peculiar merits : I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that ad-
miration,

And then dismiss the fool ; for night is
come.

And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its

prison ; my frame
Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out,
my hair

Tingles for triumph ! Slow and sure the
morn

Shall break on my pent room and
dwindling lamp

And furnace dead, and scattered earths
and ores ;

When, with a failing heart and throbb-
ing brow,

I must review my captured truth, sum
up

Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual
bearings,

Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my
scheme.

I view it sternly circumscribed, cast
down

From the high place my fond hopes
yielded it,

Proved worthless—which, in getting,
yet had cost

Another wrench to this fast-falling
frame.

Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that
chases sorrow !

I lapse back into youth, and take again
My fluttering pulse, for evidence that
God

Means good to me, will make my cause
His own.

See! I have cast off this remorseless
care

Which clogged a spirit born to soar
so free,

And my dim chamber has become a tent,
Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal...

Why do you start? I say, she listening
here,

(For yonder's Wurzburg through the
orchard-boughs)

Motions as though such ardent words
should find

No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill
fast

With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the
while!

Ha, ha!

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to
reap

No unreal joy from this your present
course,

But rather...

Par. Death! To die! I owe
that much

To what, at least, I was. I should be
sad

To live contented after such a fall,
To thrive and fatten after such reverse!

The whole plan is a makeshift, but will
last

My time.

Fest. And you have never mused
and said,

'I had a noble purpose, and the strength
To compass it; but I have stopped half-

way,

And wrongly given the firstfruits of my
toil

To objects little worthy of the gift.

Why linger round them still? why
clench my fault?

Why seek for consolation in defeat,
In vain endeavours to derive a beauty

From ugliness? why seek to make the
most

Of what no power can change, nor
strive instead

With mighty effort to redeem the Past
And, gathering up the treasures thus
cast down,

To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
At their fit destination and my own?'
You have never pondered thus?

Par. Have I, you ask?

Often at midnight, when most fancies
come,

Would some such airy project visit me:
But ever at the end... or will you hear

The same thing in a tale, a parable?
You and I, wandering over the world

wide,
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.

Just as we cry, 'No human voice before
Broke the inveterate silence of these

rocks!'
—Their querulous echo startles us; we

turn:
What ravaged structure still looks o'er
the sea?

Some characters remain, too! While we
read,

The sharp salt wind, impatient for the
last

Of even this record, wistfully comes and
goes,

Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the

wind's.

[*He sings.*

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave,

To a speeding wind and a bounding
wave,

A gallant armament:

Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,

And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-

hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,

To bear the playful billows' game:
So, each good ship was rude to see,

Rude and bare to the outward view,
But each upbore a stately tent

Where cedar-pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,

And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,

That neither noontide nor star-shine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,

Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;

But when the night-wind blew like
breath,

For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight
star,

And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled
rich scent,

And with light and perfume, music
too :

So the stars wheeled round, and the
darkness past,

And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast !

Now, one morn, land appeared !—a
speck

Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky :

' Avoid it,' cried our pilot, ' check

The shout, restrain the eager eye !'

But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day,
And land, though but a rock, drew nigh ;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every
deck !

We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp and paean glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !

All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused we till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach

To sing because our task was done.
When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !
What laughter all the distance stirs !

A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders !

' Our isles are just at hand,' they cried,

' Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping ;

Our temple-gates are opened wide,

' Our olive-groves thick shade are
keeping

For these majestic forms'—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start

From our deep dream, and knew, too
late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:

Yet we called out—' Depart !

Our gifts, once given, must here abide.

Our work is done ; we have no heart
To mar our work,'—we cried.

Fest. In truth ?

Par. Nay, wait : all this in
tracings faint

May still be read on that deserted rock,
On rugged stones strewn here and there,
but piled

In order once : then follows—mark
what follows :

' The sad rhyme of the men who proudly
clung

To their first fault, and withered in
their pride !'

Fest. Come back, then, Aureole ; as
you fear God, come !

This is foul sin ; come back. Renounce
the Past,

Forswear the Future ; look for joy no
more

But wait death's summons amid holy
sights,

And trust me for the event—peace, if
not joy.

Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear
Aureole !

Par. No way, no way ! it would not
turn to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering
moss—

'Tis well for him ; but when a sinful
man,

Envyng such slumber, may desire to
put

His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there ? Our sires knew
well

(Spite of the grave discoveries of their
sons)

The fitting course for such ; dark cells,
dim lamps,

A stone floor one may writhe on like a
worm :

No mossy pillow blue with violets !

Fest. I see no symptom of these
absolute

And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.

This verse-making can purge you well enough

Without the terrible penance you describe.

You love me still : the lusts you fear, will never

Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more !

Say but the word !

Par. No, no ; those lusts forbid : They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye

Beside you ; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself

Between them and their prey ; let some fool style me

Or king or quack, it matters not, and try Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat !

No, no ; learn better and look deeper, Festus !

If you knew how a devil sneers within me

While you are talking now of this, now that,

As though we differed scarcely save in trifles !

Fest. Do we so differ ? True, change must proceed,

Whether for good or ill ; keep from me, which !

Do not confide all secrets : I was born To hope, and you . . .

Par. To trust : you know the fruits !

Fest. Listen : I do believe, what you call trust

Was self-delusion at the best : for, see ! So long as God would kindly pioneer

A path for you, and screen you from the world,

Procure you full exemption from man's lot,

Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext

Of your engagement in His service—yield you

A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,

And turn your slave—you were content to say

Most courtly praises ! What is it, at last, But selfishness without example ? None Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours

Remained implied in it ; but now you fail,

And we, who prate about that will, are fools !

In short, God's service is established here

As He determines fit, and not your way, And this you cannot brook. Such discontent

Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once !

Affirm an absolute right to have and use Your energies ; as though the rivers should say—

' We rush to the ocean ; what have we to do

With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,

Sleeping in lazy pools ? ' Set up that plea,

That will be bold at least !

Par. 'Tis like enough ! The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,

The East produces : lo, the master nods,

And they raise terraces and garden-grounds

In one night's space ; and, this done, straight begin

Another century's sleep, to the great praise

Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,

Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,

Wake them again. I am of different mould.

I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him,

And done him service past my narrow bond,

And thus I get rewarded for my pains ! Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding

God's glory otherwise ; this is alone The sphere of its increase, as far as men

Increase it ; why, then, look beyond this sphere ?

We are His glory ; and if we be glorious,

Is not the thing achieved ?

Fest. Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours ? Though years
have changed you much,
And you have left your first love, and
retain
Its empty shade to veil your crooked
ways,
Yet I still hold that you have honoured
God.

And who shall call your course without
reward ?

For, wherefore this repining at defeat,
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high
hopes ?

I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
And what success attends me ?—simply
talk

Of passion, weakness and remorse ; in
short,

Anything but the naked truth—you
choose

This so-despised career, and cheaply
hold

My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return !

Par. And quickly. Oporinus
Has pilfered half my secrets by this
time :

And we depart by daybreak. I am
weary,

I know not how ; not even the wine-cup
soothes

My brain to-night . . .

Do you not thoroughly despise me,
Festus ?

No flattery ! One like you needs not be
told

We live and breathe deceiving and
deceived.

Do you not scorn me from your heart of
hearts,

Me and my cant, my petty subterfuges,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower
of words,

My glozing self-deceit, my outward
crust

Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morpew,
furfair

Wrap the sound flesh ?—so, see you
flatter not !

Even God flatters ! but my friend, at
least,

Is true. I would depart, secure hence-
forth

Against all further insult, hate and
wrong

From puny foes ; my one friend's scorn
shall brand me :

No fear of sinking deeper !

Fest. No, dear Aureole !
No, no ; I came to counsel faithfully.

There are old rules, made long ere we
were born,

By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
So infinitely low beside your mighty,

Majestic spirit !—even I can see
You own some higher law than ours

which calls
Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is
strength.

But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me ; and I blame you where
they bid,

Only so long as blaming promises
To win peace for your soul : the more,
that sorrow

Has fallen on me of late, and they have
helped me

So that I faint not under my distress.
But wherefore should I scruple to avow

In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
Your fate to me is most inexplicable ?

And should you perish without recom-
pense

And satisfaction yet—too hastily
I have relied on love : you may have
sinned,

But you have loved. As a mere human
matter—

As I would have God deal with fragile
men

In the end—I say that you will triumph
yet !

Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus ?—
'tis because

You love me. Sorrow, and sweet
Michal yours !

Well thought on ; never let her know
this last

Dull winding-up of all : these mis-
creants dared

Insult me—me she loved : so, grieve
her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve
her now.

Par. Michal is dead ! pray Christ we do not craze !
Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus !
 Fool, fool ! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
 I cannot bear those eyes.
Par. Nay, really dead ?
Fest. 'Tis scarce a month.
Par. Stone dead !
 —then you have laid her
 Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
 I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
 Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
 To cheat the grave ; but a far better secret.
 Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
 To the cold earth : I have thought much of it :
 For I believe we do not wholly die.
Fest. Aureole !
Par. Nay, do not laugh ; there is a reason
 For what I say : I think the soul can never
 Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
 Very unfit to put so strange a thought
 In an intelligible dress of words ;
 But take it as my trust, she is not dead.
Fest. But not on this account alone ?
 you surely,
 —Aureole, you have believed this all along ?
Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
 While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
 For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
 As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
 So it be quickly played. Away, away !
 Have your will, rabble ! while we fight the prize,
 Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats,
 And leave a clear arena for the brave
 About to perish for your sport !—Behold !

V. PARACELSUS ATTAINS.

SCENE, *Salzburg ; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian, 1541.*

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Fest. No change ! The weary night is wellnigh spent,
 The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
 Grey morning glimmers feebly : yet no change !
 Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
 That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
 Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
 Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
 Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
 As a stronghold where life intrenched itself ;
 But they are dead now—very blind and dead :
 He will drowse into death without a groan !
 My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole !
 The days are gone, are gone ! How grand thou wast !
 And now not one of those who struck thee down—
 Poor, glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
 And satisfy himself his little hand
 Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
 Another night, and yet no change !
 'Tis much
 That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
 And chafe his hands ; 'tis much : but he will sure
 Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
 Once more—but only once ! His hollow cheek
 Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
 At his own state were just about to break
 From the dying man : my brain swam,
 my throat swelled,

And yet I could not turn away. In
 truth,
 They told me how, when first brought
 here, he seemed
 Resolved to live, to lose no faculty ;
 Thus striving to keep up his shattered
 strength,
 Until they bore him to this stifling cell :
 When straight his features fell, an hour
 made white
 The flushed face and relaxed the quiver-
 ing limb,
 Only the eye remained intense awhile
 As though it recognized the tomb-like
 place,
 And then he lay as here he lies.

Ay, here !

Here is earth's noblest, nobly gar-
 landed—
 Her bravest champion with his well-won
 meed—
 Her best achievement, her sublime
 amends
 For countless generations fleeting fast
 And followed by no trace ;—the creature
 god
 She instances when angels would dispute
 The title of her brood to rank with
 them.
 Angels, this is our angel ! Those bright
 forms
 We clothe with purple, crown and call
 to thrones,
 Are human ; but not his : those are
 but men
 Whom other men press round and
 kneel before ;
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind ;
 Higher provision is for him you seek
 Amid our pomps and glories : see it
 here !
 Behold earth's paragon ! Now, raise
 thee, clay !
 God ! Thou art Lovq ! I build my faith
 on that !
 Even as I watch beside Thy tortured
 child
 Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by
 him,
 So doth Thy right hand guide us through
 the world
 Wherein we stumble. God ! what shall
 we say ?

How has he sinned ? How else should he
have done ?
Surely he sought Thy praise—Thy
praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As to forget awhile its proper end.
Dost Thou well, Lord ? Thou canst not
but prefer
That I should range myself upon his
side—
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth ? Hadst Thou but
granted him
Success, Thy honour would have
crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
Save him, dear God ; it will be like
Thee : bathe him
In light and life ! Thou art not made
like us ;
We should be wroth in such a case ; but
Thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate
thoughts
Which come unsought and will not pass
away !
I know Thee, who hast kept my path,
and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering
sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy ;
It were too strange that I should doubt
Thy love.
But what am I ? Thou madest him and
knowest
How he was fashioned. I could never
err
That way : the quiet place beside Thy
feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my
thoughts :
But he—Thou shouldst have favoured
him as well !
Ah ! he wakes ! Aureole, I am here !
'tis Festus !
I cast away all wishes save one wish—
Let him but know me, only speak to me !
He mutters ; louder and louder ; any
other
Than I, with brain less laden, could
collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do
but look !

Is it talking or singing this he utters
fast ?

Misery, that he should fix me with his
eye,

Quick talking to some other all the
while !

If he would husband this wild vehe-
mence

Which frustrates its intent !—I heard,
I know

I heard my name amid those rapid
words.

Oh, he will know me yet ! Could I
divert

This current, lead it somehow gently
back

Into the channels of the Past !—His eye,
Brighter than ever ! It must recognize
me !

Let me speak to him in another's name.
I am Erasmus : I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to
resolve.

We are your students, noble master :
leave

This wretched cell, what business have
you here ?

Our class awaits you ; come to us once
more !

(O agony ! the utmost I can do
Touches him not ; how else arrest his
ear ?)

I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like
him !

Better be mute and see what God shall
send.

Par. Stay, stay with me !

Fest. I will ; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of
old ;

Festus, you know, you must know !

Par. Festus ! Where 's
Aprile, then ? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night ? I could
not

Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough,
O, well enough ! If they have filled him
full

With magical music, as they freight a star

With light, and have remitted all his
sin,

They will forgive me too, I too shall
know !

Fest. Festus, your Festus !

Par. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and
Know ?

I try ; but that cold hand, like lead—so
cold !

Fest. My hand, see !

Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile !
We get so near—so very, very near !

'Tis an old tale : Jove strikes the Titan,
down

Not when they set about their moun-
tain-piling,

But when another rock would crown
their work !

And Phaeton—doubtless his first ra-
diant plunge

Astonished mortals ; though the god-
were calm,

And Jove prepared his thunder : all old
tales !

Fest. And what are these to you ?

Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well ; most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure under-
foot,

But they were grinning by my side, were
chuckling

To see me toil and drop away by flakes '
Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad, that
thus I fail !

Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One
year,

One month, perhaps, and I had served
your turn !

You should have curbed your spite
awhile. But now,

Who will believe 'twas you that held me
back ?

Listen : there 's shame, and hissing, and
contempt,

And none but laughs who names me,
none but spits

Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on
me !

And thus your famous plan to sink
mankind

In silence and despair, by teaching them

One of their race had probed the inmost truth,

Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—

Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair ?

Ha, ha ! why, they are hooting the empiric,

The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed

Madly upon a work beyond his wits ;

Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves

Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.

So pick and choose, among them all, accursed !

Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,

To ruin body and soul to work your ends !

No, no ; I am the first and last, I think.

Fest. Dear friend, who are accursed ? who has done . . .

Par. What have I done ? Fiends dare ask that ? or you,

Brave men ? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed

By the others ! What had you to do, sage peers ?

Here stand my rivals ; Latin, Arab, Jew,

Greek, join dead hands against me : all I ask

Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,

And even this poor privilege, it seems, They range themselves, prepared to disallow.

Only observe : why, fiends may learn from them !

How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce

Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming

Its price of blood and brain ; how they dissect

And sneeringly disparage the few truths Got at a life's cost ; they too hanging the while

About my neck, their lies misleading me And their dead names browbeating me !

Grey crew,

Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,

Is there a reason for your hate ? My truths Have shaken a little the palm about each prince ?

Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards

Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned

As we ! That yellow bear-eyed wretch in chief

To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect,

Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay speak The tale, old man ! We met there face

to face :

I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more

We meet as in that ghastly vestibule : Look to my brow ! Have I redeemed

my pledge ?

Fest. Peace, peace ; ah, see !

Par. Oh, emptiness of fame !

Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars ! —Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,

Could make me overlook the living world

To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,

But stand no longer ? What a warm light life

After the shade ! In truth, my delicate witch,

My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide

The juggles I had else detected. Fire May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours !

The cave was not so darkened by the smoke

But that your white limbs dazzled me : oh, white,

And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing !

I cared not for your passionate gestures then,

But now I have forgotten the charm of charms, The foolish knowledge which I came to seek,

While I remember that quaint dance ; and thus

I am come back, not for those mum-
meries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little
feet

Soft as an ermine's winter coat !

Fest. A light
Will struggle through these thronging
words at last,

As in the angry and tumultuous West
A soft star trembles through the
drifting clouds.

These are the strivings of a spirit which
hates

So sad a vault should coop it, and calls
up

The Past to stand between it and its
fate.

Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here !

Par. Cruel ! I seek her now—I kneel
—I shriek—

I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still
fades ;

And she is gone ; sweet human love is
gone !

'Tis only when they spring to heaven
that angels

Reveal themselves to you ; they sit all
day

Beside you, and lie down at night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse
or sleep,

And all at once they leave you and you
know them !

We are so fooled, so cheated ! Why,
even now

I am not too secure against foul play :
The shadows deepen and the walls con-
tract—

No doubt some treachery is going on !
'Tis very dusk. Where are we put,
Aprile ?

Have they left us in the lurch ? This
murky, loathsome

Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not
the hall

In the golden city ! Keep by me, Aprile !
There is a hand groping amid the black-
ness

To catch us. Have the spider-fingers
got you,

Poet ? Hold on me for your life ! if once
They pull you !—Hold !

'Tis but a dream—no more !

I have you still ; the sun comes out
again ;

Let us be happy : all will yet go well !
Let us confer : is it not like, Aprile,

That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
The value of my labours ascertained,

Just as some stream foams long among
the rocks

But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my
lot ?

What think you, poet ? Louder ! Your
clear voice

Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do
you ask

How could I still remain on earth,
should God

Grant me the great approval which I
seek ?

I, you, and God can comprehend each
other,

But men would murmur, and with
cause enough ;

For when they saw me, stainless of all
sin,

Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort,

shut from them,
I drank thus unespied ; that they live
on,

Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and wear-
iness,

While I am calm ; help being vouch-
safed to me,

And hid from them !—'Twere best con-
sider that !

You reason well, Aprile ; but at least
Let me know this, and die ! Is this too
much ?

I will learn this, if God so please, and
die !

If Thou shalt please, dear God, if Thou
shalt please !

We are so weak, we know our motives
least

In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bear my
heart to Thee ?

I know Thy mercy ; and already
thoughts

Flock fast about my soul to comfort it

And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
 For love and praise would clasp me
 willingly
 Could I resolve to seek them. Thou
 art good,
 And I should be content. Yet—yet
 first show
 I have done wrong in daring ! Rather
 give
 The supernatural consciousness of
 strength
 That fed my youth ! One only hour of
 that
 With Thee to help—O what should bar
 me then !
 Lost, lost ! Thus things are ordered
 here ! God's creatures,
 And yet He takes no pride in us !—none,
 none !
 Truly there needs another life to come !
 If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
 And other life await us not—for one,
 I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
 A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
 Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn !
 Well, onward though alone : small time
 remains,
 And much to do : I must have fruit,
 must reap
 Some profit from my toils. I doubt
 my body
 Will hardly serve me through ; while
 I have laboured
 It has decayed ; and now that I demand
 Its best assistance, it will crumble fast :
 A sad thought, a sad fate ! How very full
 Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-
 service,
 The rapt hymn rising with the rolling
 smoke,
 When glory dawns and all is at the best—
 The sacred fire may flicker and grow
 faint
 And die for want of a wood-piler's help !
 Thus fades the flagging body, and the
 soul
 Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well,
 well—
 Let men catch every word, let them lose
 nought
 Of what I say ; something may yet be
 done.

They are ruins ! Trust me who am one
 of you !
 All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
 It makes my heart sick to behold you
 crouch
 Beside your desolate fane : the arches
 dim,
 The crumbling columns grand against
 the moon—
 Could I but rear them up once more—
 but that
 May never be, so leave them ! Trust me,
 friends,
 Why should you linger here when I have
 built
 A far resplendent temple, all your own ?
 Trust me, they are but ruins ! See,
 Aprile,
 Men will not heed ! Yet were I not pre-
 pared
 With better refuge for them, tongue of
 mine
 Should ne'er reveal how blank their
 dwelling is :
 I would sit down in silence with the rest.
 Ha, what ? you spit at me, you grin and
 shriek
 Contempt into my ear—my ear which
 drank
 God's accents once ? you curse me ?
 Why men, men,
 I am not formed for it ! Those hideous
 eyes
 Will be before me sleeping, waking,
 praying,
 They will not let me even die. Spare,
 spare me,
 Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
 That horrible scorn ! You thought I
 could support it,
 But now you see what silly fragile
 creature
 Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad
 enough,
 Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was
 saved
 From hate like this. Let me but totter
 back !
 Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which
 creep
 Into my very brain, and shut these
 scorched

Eyelids, and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile ! I am very calm :
Be not deceived, there is no passion here
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing :

I am calm : I will exterminate the race !
Enough of that : 'tis said and it shall be.

And now be merry : safe and sound am I

Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.

And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile !
Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,

Aureole ? I am so wretched—my pure Michal

Is gone, and you alone are left to me,
And even you forget me. Take my hand—

Lean on me, thus. Do you not know me, Aureole ?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last ?

As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise ;
But you believe I shall go through with it :

'Tis like you, and I thank you. Thank him for me,

Dear Michal ! See how bright St. Saviour's spire

Flames in the sunset ; all its figures quaint

Gay in the glancing light : you might conceive them

A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews

Bound for their own land where redemption dawns !

Fest. Not that blest time—not our youth's time, dear God !

Par. Ha—stay ! true, I forget—all is done since !

And he is come to judge me. How he speaks,

How calm, how well ! yes, it is true, all true ;

All quackery ; all deceit ! myself can laugh

The first at it, if you desire : but still
You know the obstacles which taught me tricks

So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,

Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most approved ?

My cheats were never palmed on such as you,

Dear Festus ! I will kneel if you require me,

Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will :
I give the fight up ! let there be an end,

A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God !

But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,

When I shall die, within some narrow grave,

Not by itself—for that would be too proud—

But where such graves are thickest ; let it look

Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,

So that the peasant at his brother's bed
May tread upon my own and know it not ;

And we shall all be equal at the last,
Or classed according to life's natural ranks,

Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,

Nor gifted : lay me thus, then say, ' He lived

Too much advanced before his brother men ;

They kept him still in front : 'twas for their good

But yet a dangerous station. It were strange

That he should tell God he had never ranked

With men : so, here at least he is a man ! '

Fest. That God shall take thee to His breast, dear spirit,

Unto His breast, be sure ! and here on earth

Shall splendour sit upon thy name for ever !

Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee:
what care

If lower mountains light their snowy
phases

At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge
not

The source of day? Their theft shall be
their bale:

For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones

And worship thee alone—the master-
mind,

The thinker, the explorer, the creator!
Then, who should sneer at the convul-
sive throes

With which thy deeds were born, would
scorn as well

The winding sheet of subterranean fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less

at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering
sea!

Behold thy might in me! thou hast
infused

Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as
thou,

Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august! I recognize thee first;

I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and
late,

And though no glance reveal thou dost
accept

My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest!

Par. Festus!

Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe!

His portion shall be mine! He has done
well!

I would have sinned, had I been strong
enough,

As he has sinned! Reward him or I
waive

Reward! If Thou canst find no place for
him,

He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever! There are two of us!

Par. Dear Festus!

Fest. Here, dear Aureole!
ever by you!

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again.
Speak on!

Some story, anything—only your voice.

I shall dream else. Speak on! ay,
leaning so!

Fest. Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.

Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,

On and on, whate'er befall,

Meandering and musical,

Though the niggard pasturage

Bears not on its shaven ledge

Aught but weeds and waving grasses

To view the river as it passes,

Save here and there a scanty patch

Of primroses, too faint to catch

A weary bee.

Par. More, more; say on!

Fest. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes,

Where the glossy kingfisher

Flutters when noon-heats are near,

Glad the shelving banks to shun,

Red and steaming in the sun,

Where the shrew-mouse with pale
throat

Burrows, and the speckled stoat;

Where the quick sandpipers flit

In and out the marl and grit

That seems to breed them, brown as
they:

Nought disturbs its quiet way,

Save some lazy stork that springs,

Trailing it with legs and wings,

Whom the shy fox from the hill

Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Par. My heart! they loose my heart,
those simple words;

Its darkness passes, which nought else
could touch:

Like some dark snake that force may
not expel,

Which glideth out to music sweet and
low.

What were you doing when your voice
broke through?

A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!
Are you alone here?

Fest. All alone: you know me?
This cell?

Par. An unexceptionable vault:
Good brick and stone: the bats kept
out, the rats

Kept in: a snug nook: how should
I mistake it?

Fest. But wherefore am I here ?

Par. Ah, well remembered !

Why, for a purpose—for a purpose,
Festus !

'Tis like me : here I trifle while time
fleets,

And this occasion, lost, will ne'er
return !

You are here to be instructed. I will
tell

God's message ; but I have so much to
say,

I fear to leave half out. All is confused
No doubt ; but doubtless you will learn
in time.

He would not else have brought you
here : no doubt

I shall see clearer soon.

Fest. Tell me but this—
You are not in despair ?

Par. I ? and for what ?
Fest. Alas, alas ! he knows not, as
I feared !

Par. What is it you would ask me
with that earnest,

Dear, searching face ?

Fest. How feel you, Aureole ?
Par. Well !

Well : 'tis a strange thing. I am dying,
Festus,

And now that fast the storm of life sub-
sides,

I first perceive how great the whirl has
been.

I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no
less

A partner of its motion and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent,

And the good boat speeds through the
brightening weather ;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below ?
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'er-
strewn

With ravaged boughs and remnants of
the shore ;

And now some islet, loosened from the
land,

Swims past with all its trees, sailing to
ocean ;

And now the air is full of upturned canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees,
tamarisks

Unrooted, with their birds still clinging
to them,

All high in the wind. Even so my
varied life

Drifts by me ; I am young, old, happy,
sad,

Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once : that is, those past
conditions

Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis
but

To will, and straight the rest dissolve
away

And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance

Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless looker-on and nothing more !

Indifferent and amused but nothing
more !

And this is death : I understand it all.
New being waits me ; new perceptions
must

Be born in me before I plunge therein ;
Which last is Death's affair ; and while
I speak,

Minute by minute he is filling me
With power ; and while my foot is on
the threshold

Of boundless life—the doors unopened
yet,

All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . . . but I must not tell ;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will
come

One day. Wait, Festus ! You will die
like me !

Fest. 'Tis of that past life that I burn
to hear !

Par. You wonder it engages me just
now ?

In truth, I wonder too. What's life to
me ?

Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.

Yet how can I refrain ? 'Tis a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one
last view.

I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn
them over,

To feel how fully they are past and gone.

Still it is like some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden
purpose ;

Did I not tell you something of it,
Festus ?

I had it fast, but it has somehow slipped
Away from me ; it will return anon.

Fest. (Indeed his cheek seems young
again, his voice

Complete with its old tones : that little
laugh

Concluding every phrase, with upturned
eye,

As though one stooped above his head
to whom

He looked for confirmation and ap-
proval,

Where was it gone so long, so well pre-
served ?

Then, the fore-finger pointing as he
speaks,

Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares ; 'tis many a

year
Since I remarked it last : and this in
him,

But now a ghastly wreck !)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out

at last
That worldly things are utter vanity ?

That man is made for weakness, and
should wait

In patient ignorance till God appoint . . .

Par. Ha, the purpose, the true pur-
pose : that is it

How could I fail to apprehend ! You
here,

I thus ! But no more trifling ; I see all,
I know all : my last mission shall be done

If strength suffice. No trifling ! Stay ;
this posture

Hardly befits one thus about to speak :
I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild ?
You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help ; no help ;
Not even your hand. So ! there, I stand

once more !
Speak from a couch ? I never lectured
thus.

My gown—the scarlet lined with fur ;
now put

The chain about my neck ; my signet-
ring

Is still upon my hand, I think—even so ;
Last, my good sword ; ha, trusty Azoth,

leapest
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last
time ?

This couch shall be my throne : I bid
these walls

Be consecrate, this wretched cell
become

A shrine, for here God speaks to men
through me !

Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.

Fest. I am dumb with wonder.

Par. Listen, therefore, Festus !
There will be time enough, but none to

spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You

doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus ; very happy.

Fest. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts
him thus !

Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all
your sin ?

Par. Ay, pardoned ! yet why par-
doned ?

Fest. 'Tis God's praise
That man is bound to seek, and you . . .

Par. Have lived !
We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much,

as I thought,
And in effect need mercy, for I strove

To do that very thing ; but, do your
best

Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for
ever.

Pardon from Him, because of praise
denied—

Who calls me to Himself to exalt Him-
self ?

He might laugh as I laugh !

Fest. But all comes
To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for

mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns
them not ;

They are no use that way : they should
lie down

Content as God has made them, nor go
mad

In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Par. No, no; mistake me not; let me not work

More harm than I have done! This is my case:

If I go joyous back to God, yet bring No offering, if I render up my soul Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,

If I appear the better to love God For sin, as one who has no claim on Him,—

Be not deceived! It may be surely thus With me, while higher prizes still await The mortal persevering to the end Beside I am not all so valueless:

I have been something, though too soon I left

Following the instincts of that happy time!

Fest. What happy time? For God's sake, for man's sake, What time was happy? All I hope to know

That answer will decide. What happy time?

Par. When but the time I vowed myself to man?

Fest. Great God, Thy judgments are inscrutable!

Par. Yes, it was in me; I was born for it—

I, Paracelsus: it was mine by right. Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul

Might learn from its own motions that some task

Like this awaited it about the world; Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours

For fit delights to stay its longings vast; And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her

To fill the creature full she dared to frame

Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,

Grow in demand, still craving more and more,

And make each joy conceded prove a pledge

Of other joy to follow—bating nought Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence

To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung

As an extreme, last boon, from destiny, Into occasion for new covetings, New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless a strong soul

Alone, unaided might attain to this, So glorious is our nature, so august Man's inborn uninstructed impulses, His naked spirit so majestic!

But this was born in me; I was made so;

Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,

The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed

Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind, Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears

Were saved me; thus I entered on my course!

You may be sure I was not all exempt From human trouble; just so much of doubt

As bade me plant a surer foot upon The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid

The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart

Trembling so much as warned me I stood there

On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast

Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,

I stood at first where all aspire at last To stand: the secret of the world was mine.

I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed, Uncomprehended by our narrow thought, But somehow felt and known in every shift

And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore

Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,

What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy

In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss, From whom all being emanates, all power

Proceeds; in whom is life for ever—more,

Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes ; where dwells enjoyment
there is He !

With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and forever !
The centre-fire heaves underneath the
earth,

And the earth changes like a human
face ;

The molten ore bursts up among the
rocks,

Winds into the stone's heart, out-
branches bright

In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams
bask—

God joys therein ! The wroth sea's
waves are edged

With foam, white as the bitten lip of
hate,

When, in the solitary waste, strange
groups

Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-
like,

Staring together with their eyes on
flame—

God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth
pride !

Then all is still ; earth is a wintry clod :
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress,
passes

Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, be-
tween

The withered tree-roots and the cracks
of frost,

Like a smile striving with a wrinkled
face ;

The grass grows bright, the boughs are
swollen with blooms

Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run

Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-
gulls

Flit where the strand is purple with its
tribe

Of nested limpets ; savage creatures
seek

Their loves in wood and plain—and
God renews

His ancient rapture ! Thus He dwells in
all,

From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this
scheme

Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life : whose attributes had here and
there

Been scattered o'er the visible world
before,

Asking to be combined, dim fragments
meant

To be united in some wondrous whole,
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to
make,

Some point where all those scattered
rays should meet

Convergent in the faculties of man.
Power—neither put forth blindly, nor
controlled

Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be
used

At risk, inspired or checked by hope and
fear :

Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,

Strengthened by love : love—not
serenely pure,

But strong from weakness, like a
chance-sown plant

Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth
changed buds

And softer stains, unknown in happier
climes ;

Love which endures and doubts and is
oppressed

And cherished, suffering much and much
sustained,

A blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered
trust :—

Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about

The inferior natures, and all lead up
higher,

All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out
false,

And man appears at last. So far the
seal

Is put on life ; one stage of being complete,

One scheme wound up : and from the grand result

A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains

Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth ; man, once descried, imprints for ever

His presence on all lifeless things : the winds

Are henceforth voices, in a wail or shout,
A querulous mutter, or a quick gay laugh,

Never a senseless gust now man is born !
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,

A secret they assemble to discuss
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare

Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat

Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head : no bird

Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above

That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye :

The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops

With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,

Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn

Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :
—And this to fill us with regard for man,
With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place,
For these things tend still upward, progress is

The law of life, man's self is not yet Man !

Nor shall I deem his object served, his end

Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,

While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind

O'erlooks its prostrate fellows : when the host

Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,

I say, begins man's general infancy !
For wherefore make account of feverish starts

Of restless members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body

Slumbers as in a grave ? O, long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,

The peaceful mouth disturbed ; half-uttered speech

Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,

The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched stronger,

As it would pluck a lion by the jaw ;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep !

But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,

Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,

He shall start up and stand on his own earth,

Thence shall his long triumphant march begin,

Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly roused,

What he achieves shall be set down to him !

When all the race is perfected alike
As Man, that is ; all tended to mankind,

And, man produced, all has its end thus far :

But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise

August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle run by life.

For men begin to pass their nature's bound,

And find new hopes and cares which fast
 supplant
 Their proper joys and griefs ; they out-
 grow all
 The narrow creeds of right and wrong,
 which fade
 Before the unmeasured thirst for good :
 while peace
 Rises within them ever more and more.
 Such men are even now upon the earth,
 Serene amid the half-formed creatures
 round
 Who should be saved by them and joined
 with them.
 Such was my task, and I was born to it—
 Free, as I said but now, from much that
 chains
 Spirits, high-dowered but limited and
 vexed
 By a divided and delusive aim,
 A shadow mocking a reality
 Whose truth avails not wholly to dis-
 perse
 The fitting mimic called up by itself,
 And so remains perplexed and nigh put
 out
 By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
 I, from the first, was never cheated
 thus ;
 I never fashioned out a fancied good
 Distinct from man's ; a service to be
 done,
 A glory to be ministered unto,
 With powers put forth at man's expense,
 withdrawn
 From labouring in his behalf ; a strength
 Denied that might avail him. I cared
 not
 Lest his success ran counter to success
 Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
 And to man's glory, vowed I soul and
 limb.
 Yet, constituted thus, and thus en-
 dowed,
 I failed : I gazed on power till I grew
 blind.
 On power ; I could not take my eyes
 from that :
 That only, I thought, should be pre-
 served, increased
 At any risk, displayed, struck out at
 once—
 The sign and note and character of man.

I saw no use in the Past : only a scene
 Of degradation, imbecility,
 The record of disgraces best forgotten,
 A sullen page in human chronicles
 Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
 Should not be all-sufficient even now ;
 Or why his annals should be forced to
 tell
 That once the tide of light, about to
 break
 Upon the world, was sealed within its
 spring :
 I would have had one day, one moment's
 space,
 Change man's condition, push each
 slumbering claim
 Of mastery o'er the elemental world
 At once to full maturity, then roll
 Oblivion o'er the tools, and hide from
 man
 What night had ushered morn. Not so,
 dear child
 Of after-days, wilt thou reject the Past,
 Big with deep warnings of the proper
 tenure
 By which thou hast the earth : the
 Present for thee
 Shall have distinct and trembling
 beauty, seen
 Beside that Past's own shade whence,
 in relief,
 Its brightness shall stand out : nor on
 thee yet
 Shall burst the Future, as successive
 zones
 Of several wonder open on some spirit
 Flying secure and glad from heaven to
 heaven :
 But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
 While hope and fear and love shall keep
 thee man !
 All this was hid from me : as one by one
 My dreams grew dim, my wide aims
 circumscribed,
 As actual good within my reach de-
 creased,
 While obstacles sprung up this way and
 that
 To keep me from effecting half the sum,
 Small as it proved ; as objects, mean
 within
 The primal aggregate, seemed, even the
 least,

Itself a match for my concentrated strength—

What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair ? The power I sought for man,
seemed God's.

In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know,
one sin

Had spotted my career from its uprise ;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there !

And as the poor melodious wretch dis-
burthened

His heart, and moaned his weakness in
my ear,

I learned my own deep error ; love's
undoing

Taught me the worth of love in man's
estate,

And what proportion love should hold
with power

In his right constitution ; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always
much more love ;

Love still too straitened in its present
means,

And earnest for new power to set it free.
I learned this, and supposed the whole
was learned :

And thus, when men received with
stupid wonder

My first revealings, would have wor-
shipped me,

And I despised and loathed their pro-
ffered praise—

When, with awakened eyes, they took
revenge

For past credulity in casting shame

On my real knowledge, and I hated
them—

It was not strange I saw no good in
man,

To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere : and
why ?

In my own heart love had not been
made wise

To trace love's faint beginnings in man-
kind,

To know even hate is but a mask of
love's,

To see a good in evil, and a hope

In ill-success ; to sympathize, be proud

Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fal-
lacies,

Their prejudice and fears and cares and
doubts ;

Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
Their error, all tend upwardly though
weak,

Like plants in mines which never saw
the sun,

But dream of him, and guess where he
may be,

And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let
men

Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly ; and shape forth
a third

And better-tempered spirit, warned by
both :

As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the light-springs, beamless
thence itself—

And the dark orb which borders the
abyss,

Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its
course

A temperate and equidistant world.

Meanwhile, I have done well, though
not all well.

As yet men cannot do without contempt ;
'Tis for their good, and therefore fit
awhile

That they reject the weak, and scorn the
false,

Rather than praise the strong and true,
in me :

But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast ; its splendour, soon
or late,

Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge
one day.

You understand me ? I have said
enough ?

Fest. Now die, dear Aureole !

Par. Festus, let my hand—

This hand, lie in your own, my own true
friend !

Aprile ! Hand in hand with you, Aprile !

Fest. And this was Paracelsus !

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

FLORENCE, 1850

CHRISTMAS-EVE

I.

Out of the little chapel I flung,
 Into the fresh night-air again.
 Five minutes I waited, held my tongue
 In the doorway, to escape the rain
 That drove in gusts down the common's
 centre,

At the edge of which the chapel stands,
 Before I plucked up heart to enter.
 Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
 Reached past me, groping for the latch
 Of the inner door that hung on catch,
 More obstinate the more they fumbled,
 Till, giving way at last with a scold
 Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled

One sheep more to the rest in fold,
 And left me irresolute, standing sentry
 In the sheepfold's slath-and-plaster entry,
 Four feet long by two feet wide,
 Partitioned off from the vast inside—
 I blocked up half of it at least.
 No remedy; the rain kept driving.
 They eyed me much as some wild beast,
 That congregation, still arriving,
 Some of them by the main road, white
 A long way past me into the night,
 Skirting the common, then diverging;
 Not a few suddenly emerging
 From the common's self thro' the paling-
 gaps,

—They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
 Where the road stops short with its
 safeguard border

Of lamps, as tired of such disorder;—
 But the most turned in yet more
 abruptly

From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
 Where the town's bad blood once slept
 corruptly,

Which now the little chapel rallies
 And leads into day again,—its priestli-
 ness

Lending itself to hide their beastliness

Socleverly (thanks in part to themason),
 And putting so cheery a whitewashed
 face on

Those neophytes too much in lack of it.
 That, where you cross the common as I
 did,

And meet the party thus presided,
 'Mount Zion' with Love-lane at the
 back of it,

They front you as little disconcerted
 As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
 And her wicked people made to mind
 him,

Lot might have marched with Gomorrah
 behind him.

II.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the
 common,

In came the flock: the fat weary
 woman,

Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
 Her umbrella with a mighty report,
 Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
 A wreck of whalebones; then, with a
 snort,

Like a startled horse, at the interloper
 (Who humbly knew himself improper.
 But could not shrink up small enough)
 —Round to the door, and in,—the
 gruff

Hinge's invariable scold
 Making my very blood run cold.
 Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
 On broken clogs, the many-tattered
 Little old-faced, peaking, sister-turned-
 mother

Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
 Somehow up, with its spotted face,
 From the cold, on her breast, the one
 warm place;

She too must stop, wring the poor ends
 dry

Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
 Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
 Already from my own clothes' dropping,

Which yet she seemed to grudge I
 should stand on ;
 Then, stooping down to take off her
 pattens,
 She bore them defiantly, in each hand
 one,
 Planted together before her breast
 And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
 Close on her heels, the dingy satins
 Of a female something, past me flitted,
 With lips as much too white, as a streak
 Lay far too red on each hollow cheek ;
 And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
 All that was left of a woman once,
 Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
 Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent
 Thief,
 With his jaw bound up in a handker-
 chief,
 And eyelids screwed together tight,
 Led himself in by some inner light.
 And, except from him, from each that
 entered,
 I got the same interrogation—
 'What, you, the alien, you have ven-
 tured
 To take with us, the elect, your station ?
 A carer for none of it, a Gallio ?'—
 Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
 At a common prey, in each countenance
 As of huntsman giving his hounds the
 tallyho.
 And, when the door's cry drowned their
 wonder,
 The draught, it always sent in shutting,
 Made the flame of the single tallow
 candle
 In the cracked square lantern I stood
 under,
 Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting,
 As it were, the luckless cause of scandal :
 I verily fancied the zealous light
 (In the chapel's secret, too !) for spite
 Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
 With the airs of a Saint John's Candle-
 stick.
 There was no standing it much longer.
 'Good folks,' thought I, as resolve grew
 stronger,
 'This way you perform the Grand-
 Inquisitor,
 When the weather sends you a chance
 visitor ?

You are the men, and wisdom shall die
 with you,
 And none of the old Seven Churches vie
 with you !
 But still, despite the pretty perfection
 To which you carry your trick of ex-
 clusiveness,
 And, taking God's word under wise
 protection,
 Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
 And bid one reach it over hot plough-
 shares,—
 Still, as I say, though you've found
 salvation,
 If I should choose to cry, as now,
 "Shares !"—
 See if the best of you bars me my ration !
 I prefer, if you please, for my expounder
 Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own
 Founder ;
 Mine's the same right with your poorest
 and sickliest,
 Supposing I don the marriage-vesti-
 ment :
 So, shut your mouth and open your
 Testament,
 And carve me my portion at your
 quickest !'
 Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad
 With wizened face in want of soap,
 And wet apron wound round his waist
 like a rope,
 (After stopping outside, for his cough
 was bad,
 To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
 And so avoid disturbing the preacher)
 —Passed in, I sent my elbow spike-
 wise
 At the shutting door, and entered like-
 wise,
 Received the hinge's accustomed greet-
 ing,
 And crossed the threshold's magic
 pentacle,
 And found myself in full conventicle,
 —To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
 On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
 Which, calling its flock to their special
 clover,
 Found all assembled and one sheep
 over,
 Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was
 mine.

III.

I very soon had enough of it.
 The hot smell and the human noises,
 And my neighbour's coat, the greasy
 cuff of it,
 Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand
 poises,
 Compared with the pig-of-lead-like
 pressure
 Of the preaching-man's immense stu-
 pidity,
 As he poured his doctrine forth, full
 measure,
 To meet his audience's avidity.
 You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
 To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:
 No sooner got our friend an inkling
 Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
 (Whene'er 'twas that the thought first
 struck him,
 How death, at unawares, might duck him
 Deeper than the grave, and quench
 The gin-shop's light in Hell's grim
 drench)
 Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
 As to hug the book of books to pieces:
 And, a patchwork of chapters and texts
 in severance,
 Not improved by the private dog's-ears
 and creases,
 Having clothed his own soul with, he'd
 fain see equipt yours,—
 So, tossed you again your Holy Scrip-
 tures.
 And you picked them up, in a sense, no
 doubt:
 Nay, had but a single face of my neigh-
 bours
 Appeared to suspect that the preacher's
 labours
 Were help which the world could be
 saved without,
 'Tis odds but I might have borne in
 quiet
 A quail or two at my spiritual diet,
 Or (who can tell?) perchance even
 mustered
 Somewhat to urge in behalf of the
 sermon:
 But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
 Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
 With such content in every snuffle,
 As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.

My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
 And thumb round thumb went twirling
 faster,
 While she, to his periods keeping
 measure,
 Maternally devoured the pastor.
 The man with the handkerchief, untied it,
 Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
 Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
 And rocked himself as the woman was
 doing.
 The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
 Kept down his cough. 'Twas too
 provoking!
 My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff
 of it,
 So, saying, like Eve when she plucked
 the apple,
 'I wanted a taste, and now there's
 enough of it,'
 I flung out of the little chapel.

IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
 In the wind too; the moon was risen,
 And would have shone out pure and
 full,
 But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
 Block on block built up in the West,
 For what purpose the wind knows best,
 Who changes his mind continually.
 And the empty other half of the sky
 Seemed in its silence as if it knew
 What, any moment, might look through
 A chance-gap in that fortress massy:—
 Through its fissures you got hints
 Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
 Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
 Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
 Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames
 bellow,
 All a-simmer with intense strain
 To let her through,—then blank again,
 At the hope of her appearance failing.
 Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
 Shows a narrow path directly across;
 'Tis ever dry walking there, on the
 moss—
 Besides, you go gently all the way up-
 hill.
 I stooped under and soon felt better;
 My head grew light, my limbs more
 supple,

As I walked on, glad to have slept the
fetter.

My mind was full of the scene I had left,
That placid flock, that pastor veci-
ferant,

—How this outside was pure and
different !

The sermon, now—what a mingled weft
Of good and ill ! were either less,
Its fellow had coloured the whole
distinctly ;

But alas for the excellent earnestness,
And the truths, quite true if stated suc-
cinctly,

But as surely false, in their quaint
presentment,

However to pastor and flock's content-
ment !

Say rather, such truths looked false to
your eyes,

With his provings and parallels twisted
and twined,

Till how could you know them, grown
double their size

In the natural fog of the good man's
mind,

Like yonder spots of our roadside
lamps

Haloed about with the common's
damps ?

Truth remains true, the fault's in the
prover ;

The zeal was good, and the aspiration ;
And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
Pharaoh received no demonstration

By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—

Although, as our preacher thus em-
bellished it,

Apparently his hearers relished it
With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph ?
But so it is everywhere, one way with
all of them !

These people have really felt, no doubt,
A something, the motion they style the
Call of them ;

And this is their method of bringing
about,

By a mechanism of words and tones,
(So many texts in so many groans)
A sort of reviving or reproducing,
More or less perfectly, (who can tell ?—)

Of the mood itself, that strengthens by
using ;

And how it happens, I understand well.
A tune was born in my head last week,
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-
shriek

Of the train, as I came by it, up from
Manchester ;

And when, next week, I take it back
again,

My head will sing to the engine's clack
again,

While it only makes my neighbour's
haunches stir,

—Finding no dormant musical sprout
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.

'Tis the taught already that profits by
teaching ;

He gets no more from the railway's
preaching

Than, from this preacher who does the
rail's office, I ;

Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous
eye on.

Still, why paint over their door ' Mount
Zion,'

To which all flesh shall come, saith the
prophecy ?

v.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case ?
After how many modes, this Christmas-
Eve,

Does the selfsame weary thing take
place ?

The same endeavour to make you
believe,

And with much the same effect, no
more :

Each method abundantly convincing,
As I say, to those convinced before,

But scarce to be swallowed without
wincing,

By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
I have my own church equally :

And in this church my faith sprang first !
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,

And the wind began again, with a burst
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound

From the heart beneath, as if, God
speeding me,

I entered His church-door, Nature
leading me)

—In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, His visible power ;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of that power, an equal evidence
That His love, there too, was the nobler
dower.

For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean : God's all,
man's nought :

But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were, a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at Him from a place apart,
And use His gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not
sever

Man's very elements from man,
Saying, ' But all is God's '—whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, His own word saith, to grieve Him,
But able to glorify Him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and
prayer,

Made perfect as a thing of course.
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock,
And, looking to God who ordained
divorce

Of the rock from His boundless continent,
Sees, in His power made evident,
Only excess by a million-fold
O'er the power God gave man in the
mould.

For, note : man's hand, first formed to
carry

A few pounds' weight, when taught to
marry

Its strength with an engine's, lifts a
mountain,

—Advancing in power by one degree ;
And why count steps through eternity ?
But love is the ever-springing fountain :
Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
For the water's play, but the water-
head—

How can he multiply or reduce it ?
As easy create it, as cause it to cease ;
He may profit by it, or abuse it,
But 'tis not a thing to bear increase
As power does : be love less or more
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but
Love's sum remains what it was before.
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
As seen through power, ever above
All modes which make it manifest,
My soul brought all to a single test—
That He; the Eternal First and Last,
Who, in His power, had so surpassed
All man conceives of what is might,—
Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
—Would prove as infinitely good ;
Would never, (my soul understood,)
With power to work all love desires,
Bestow e'en less than man requires :
That He who endlessly was teaching,
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
What love can do in the leaf or stone,
So that to master this alone,
This done in the stone or leaf for me,
I must go on learning endlessly)
Would never need that I, in turn,
Should point him out a defect unheeded,
And show that God had yet to learn
What the meanest human creature
needed,—

—Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
'Tracking His way through doubts and
fears,

While the stupid earth on which I stay
Suffers no change, but passive adds
Its myriad years to myriads,
Though I, He gave it to, decay,
Seeing death come and choose about me,
And my dearest ones depart without me.
No ! love which, on earth, amid all the
shows of it,

Has ever been seen the sole good of life
in it,

The love, ever growing there, spite of
the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's
repose of it !

And I shall behold Thee, face to face,
O God, and in Thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast Thou !
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would
now,

I shall find as able to satiate
 The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
 Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
 With this sky of Thine, that I now walk
 under,
 And glory in Thee for, as I gaze
 Thus, thus ! oh, let men keep their ways
 Of seeking Thee in a narrow shrine—
 Be this my way ! And this is mine !

VI.

For lo, what think you ? suddenly
 The rain and the wind ceased, and the
 sky

Received at once the full fruition
 Of the moon's consummate apparition.
 The black cloud-barricade was riven,
 Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
 Deep in the West ; while, bare and
 breathless,
 North and South and East lay ready
 For a glorious Thing, that, dauntless,
 deathless,

Sprang across them, and stood steady.
 'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
 From heaven to heaven extending,
 perfect

As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
 It rose, distinctly at the base
 With its seven proper colours chorded,
 Which still, in the rising, were com-
 pressed,

Until at last they coalesced,
 And supreme the spectral creature
 lorded

In a triumph of whitest white,—
 Above which intervened the night.
 But above night too, like only the next,
 The second of a wondrous sequence,
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
 Till the heaven of heavens were circum-
 flect,

Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
 Fainter, flushier, and flightier,—
 Rapture dying along its verge !
 Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
 Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
 On to the keystone of that arc ?

VII.

This sight was shown me, there and
 then,—
 Me, one out of a world of men,

Singled forth, as the chance might hap
 To another, if in a thunderclap
 Where I heard noise, and you saw flame,
 Someone man knew God called his name.
 For me, I think I said, 'Appear !
 Good were it to be ever here.
 If Thou wilt, let me build to Thee
 Service tabernacles Three,
 Where, forever in Thy presence,
 In ecstatic acquiescence,
 Far alike from thriftless learning
 And ignorance's undiscerning,
 I may worship and remain !'
 Thus, at the show above me, gazing
 With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
 Glutted with the glory, blazing
 Throughout its whole mass, over and
 under,
 Until at length it burst asunder,
 And out of it bodily there streamed
 The too-much glory, as it seemed,
 Passing from out me to the ground,
 Then palely serpentine round
 Into the dark with mayzy error.

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.
 He was there.
 He Himself with His human air,
 On the narrow pathway, just before.
 I saw the back of Him, no more—
 He had left the chapel, then, as I.
 I forgot all about the sky.
 No face : only the sight
 Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
 With a hem that I could recognize.
 I felt terror, no surprise :
 My mind filled with the cataract,
 At one bound, of the mighty fact.
 I remembered, He did say
 Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
 Where two or three should meet and
 pray,
 He would be in their midst, their friend :
 Certainly He was there with them.
 And my pulses leaped for joy
 Of the golden thought without alloy,
 That I saw His very vesture's hem.
 Then rushed the blood back, cold and
 clear
 With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear,
 And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
 To the salvation of the vest,

' But not so, Lord ! It cannot be
That Thou, indeed, art leaving me—
Me, that have despised Thy friends.
Did my heart make no amends ?
Thou art the love of God—above
His power, didst hear me place His
love,

And that was leaving the world for Thee.
Therefore Thou must not turn from me
As if I had chosen the other part.
Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
Our best is bad, nor bears Thy test ;
Still, it should be our very best.
I thought it best that Thou, the Spirit,
Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
And in beauty, as even we require it—
Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
I left but now, as scarcely fitted
For Thee : I knew not what I pitied.
But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
What is it to Thee, who curest sinning ?
Am I not weak as Thou art strong ?
I have looked to Thee from the beginning,
Straight up to Thee through all the
world

Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
To nothingness on either side :
And since the time Thou wast descried,
Spite of the weak heart, so have I
Lived ever, and so fain would die,
Living and dying, Thee before !
But if Thou leavest me—'

IX.

Less or more,

I suppose that I spoke thus.
When,—have mercy, Lord, on us !
The whole Face turned upon me full.
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe
it

In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discoloured web—
So lay I, saturate with brightness.
And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
With my senses settling fast and
steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and
drift

Of the venture's amplitude, still eddying
On, just before me, still to be followed,

As it carried me after with its motion ;
What shall I say ?—as a path were
hollowed

And a man went weltering through the
ocean,

Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as
through

I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals,—
' So He said, and so it befalls.
God who registers the cup
Of mere cold water, for His sake
To a disciple rendered up,
Disdains not His own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered :
And because it was my heart I proffered.
With true love trembling at the brim,
He suffers me to follow Him
For ever, my own way,—dispensed
From seeking to be influenced
By all the less immediate ways
That earth, in worships manifold,
Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold !'

X.

And so we crossed the world and
stopped.

For where am I, in city or plain,
Since I am 'ware of the world again ?
And what is this that rises propped
With pillars of prodigious girth ?
Is it really on the earth,
This miraculous Dome of God ?
Has the angel's measuring-rod
Which numbered cubits, gem from
gem,

'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
Meted it out,—and what he meted,
Have the sons of men completed ?
—Binding, ever as he bade,
Columns in this colonnade
With arms wide open to embrace
The entry of the human race
To the breast of . . . what is it, yon
building,

Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
With marble for brick, and stones of price
For garniture of the edifice ?
Now I see ; it is no dream ;
It stands there and it does not seem :

For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
And thus I have read of it in books
Often in England, leagues away,
And wondered how these fountains play,
Growing up eternally
Each to a musical water-tree,
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite layers underneath.
Liar and dreamer in your teeth !
I, the sinner that speak to you,
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and
knew

Both this and more. For see, for see,
The dark is rent, mine eye is free
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
And I view inside, and all there, all,
As the swarming hollow of a hive,
The whole Basilica alive !
Men in the chancel, body, and nave,
Men on the pillars' architrave,
Men on the statues, men on the tombs
With popes and kings in their porphyry
wombs,

All famishing in expectation
Of the main-altar's consummation.
For see, for see, the rapturous moment
Approaches, and earth's best endowment
Blends with Heaven's ; the taper-fires
Pant up, the winding brazen spires
Heave loftier yet the baldachin ;
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
Supsire in clouds ; the organ blatant
Holds his breath and grovels latent,
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
(Like Behemoth when He praised him)
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
On the sudden pavement strewed
With faces of the multitude.
Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows Heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very Man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,
As His servant John received the words,
' I died, and live for evermore ! '

XI.

Yet I was left outside the door.
Why sat I there on the threshold-stone,
Left till He return, alone
Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold ?—
My reason, to my doubt, replied,
As if a book were opened wide,
And at a certain page I traced
Every record undefaced,
Added by successive years,—
The harvestings of truth's stray ears
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
Bound together for belief.

Yes, I said—that He will go
And sit with these in turn, I know.
Their faith's heart beats, though her
head swims

Too giddily to guide her limbs,
Disabled by their palsy-stroke
From propping me. Though Rome's
gross yoke

Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies :
And He, whose eye detects a spark
Even where, to man's, the whole seems
dark,

May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footstep through life's maze,
Because Himself discerns all ways
Open to reach Him : I, a man
Able to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the Founder's base :
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,
Awaiting His return outside.

—'Twas thus my reason straight replied,
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried,—what has been abusing
me
That I should wait here lonely and
coldly,
Instead of rising, entering boldly,

Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to
shift ?

Do these men praise Him ? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise !

I see the error ; but above

The scope of error, see the love.—

Oh, love of those first Christian days !

—Fanned so soon into a blaze,
From the spark preserved by the tram-
pled sect,

That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled
From the throne he reigned upon :

—You looked up, and he was gone !

Gone, his glory of the pen !

—Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,

Bade her scribes abhor the trick

Of poetry and rhetoric,

And exult, with hearts set free,

In blessed imbecility

Scrawled, perchance, on some torn
sheet,

Leaving Sallust incomplete.

Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter !

—Love, while able to acquaint her

With the thousand statues yet

Fresh from chisel, pictures wet

From brush, she saw on every side,

Chose rather with an infant's pride

To frame those portents which impart

Such unction to true Christian Art.

Gone, music too ! The air was stirred

By happy wings : Terpander's bird

(That, when the cold came, fled away)

Would tarry not the wintry day,—

As more-enduring sculpture must,—

Till a filthy saint rebuked the gust

With which he chanced to get a sight

Of some dear naked Aphrodite

He glanced a thought above the toes of,

By breaking zealously her nose off.

Love, surely, from that music's lin-
gering,

Might have filched her organ-fingering,

Nor chosen rather to set prayings

To hog-grunts, praises to horse-
neighings.

Love was the startling thing, the new ;

Love was the all-sufficient too ;

And seeing that, you see the rest :

As a babe can find its mother's breast

As well in darkness as in light,
Love shut our eyes, and all seemed
right.

True, the world's eyes are open now :

—Less need for me to disallow

Some few that keep Love's zone un-
buckled,

Peevish as ever to be suckled,

Lulled by the same old baby-prattle

With intermixture of the rattle,

When she would have them creep,
stand steady

Upon their feet, or walk already.

Not to speak of trying to climb.

I will be wise another time,

And not desire a wall between us,

When next I see a church-roof cover

So many species of one genus,

All with foreheads bearing *Lover*

Written above the earnest eyes of them ;

All with breasts that beat for beauty,

Whether sublimed, to the surprise of
them,

In noble daring, steadfast duty,

The heroic in passion, or in action,—

Or, lowered for the senses' satisfaction,

To the mere outside of human creatures,

Mere perfect form and faultless features

What ? with all Rome here, whence to
levy

Such contributions to their appetite,

With women and men in a gorgeous
bevy,

They take, as it were, a padlock, and it
tight

On their southern eyes, restrained from
feeding

On the glories of their ancient reading,

On the beauties of their modern singing,

On the wonders of the builder's bringing.

On the majesties of Art around them,—

And, all these loves, late struggling in-
cessant,

When faith has at last united and
bound them,

They offer up to God for a present ?

Why, I will, on the whole, be rather
proud of it,—

And, only taking the act in reference

To the other recipients who might have
allowed of it,

I will rejoice that God had the pre-
ference.

XII.

So I summed up my new resolves :
 Too much love there can never be.
 And where the intellect devolves
 Its function on love exclusively,
 I, a man who possesses both,
 Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
 —Will feast my love, then depart else-
 where,
 That my intellect may find its share.
 And ponder, O soul, the while thou
 departest,
 And see thou applaud the great heart of
 the artist,
 Who, examining the capabilities
 Of the block of marble he has to fashion
 Into a type of thought or passion,—
 Not always, using obvious facilities,
 Shapes it, as any artist can,
 Into a perfect symmetrical man,
 Complete from head to foot of the life-
 size,
 —Such as old Adam stood in his wife's
 eyes,—
 But, now and then, bravely aspires to
 consummate
 A Colossus by no means so easy to come
 at,
 And uses the whole of his block for the
 bust,
 Leaving the minds of the public to finish
 it,
 Since cut it ruefully short he must :
 On the face alone he expends his devo-
 tion,
 He rather would mar than resolve to
 diminish it,
 —Saying, ' Applaud me for this grand
 notion
 Of what a face may be ! As for com-
 pleting it
 In breast and body and limbs, do *that*,
 you ! '
 All hail ! I fancy how, happily meeting
 it,
 A trunk and legs would perfect the
 statue,
 Could man carve so as to answer volition.
 And how much nobler than petty cavils,
 Were a hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
 Some artist of another ambition,
 Who *having* a block to carve, no bigger,

Has spent his power on the opposite
 quest,
 And believed to begin at the feet was
 best—
 For so may I see, ere I die, the whole
 figure !

XIII.

No sooner said than out in the night !
 My heart beat lighter and more light :
 And still, as before, I was walking swift,
 With my senses settling fast and
 steadying,
 But my body caught up in the whirl and
 drift
 Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
 On just before me, still to be followed,
 As it carried me after with its motion,
 —What shall I say ?—as a path were
 hollowed,
 And a man went weltering through the
 ocean,
 Sucked along in the flying wake
 Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV.

Alone ! I am left alone once more—
 (Save for the garment's extreme fold
 Abandoned still to bless my hold)
 Alone, beside the entrance-door
 Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
 —Like nothing I ever saw before
 At home in England, to my knowledge.
 The tall, old, quaint, irregular town !
 It may be . . . though *which*, I can't
 affirm . . . any
 Of the famous middle-age towns of
 Germany ;
 And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
 Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, or Frankfort,
 Or Göttingen, that I have to thank
 for 't ?
 It may be Göttingen,—most likely.
 Through the open door I catch obliquely
 Glimpses of a lecture-hall ;
 And not a bad assembly neither—
 Ranged decent and symmetrical
 On benches, waiting what's to see there ;
 Which, holding still by the vesture's
 hem,
 I also resolve to see with them,
 Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
 The chance of joining in fellowship

With any that call themselves His friends,

As these folks do, I have a notion.
But hist—a buzzing and emotion !
All settle themselves, the while ascends
By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,

Step by step, deliberate
Because of his cranium's over-freight,
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
If I have proved an accurate guesser,
The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.

I felt at once as if there ran
A shoot of love from my heart to the man—

That sallow, virgin-minded, studious
Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
That woke my sympathetic spasm,
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)

And stood, surveying his auditory
With a wan pure look, wellnigh celestial,—

Those blue eyes had survived so much !
While, under the foot they could not smutch,

Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats
Was done with, died into a silence ;
And, when each glance was upward sent,
Each bearded mouth composed intent,
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence,—

He pushed back higher his spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,

And giving his head of hair—a hake
Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity—

One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie

When about to impart, on mature digestion,

Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)

—The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,

Broke into his Christmas-Eve's discourse.

xv.

And he began it by observing
How reason dictated that men
Should rectify the natural swerving,
By a reversion, now and then,
To the well-heads of knowledge, few
And far away, whence rolling grew
The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
Commingled, as we needs must think,
With waters alien to the source ;
To do which, aimed this eve's discourse :
Since, where could be a fitter time
For tracing backward to its prime,
This Christianity, this lake,
This reservoir, whereat we slake,
From one or other bank, our thirst ?
So, he proposed inquiring first
Into the various sources whence
This Myth of Christ is derivable ;
Demanding from the evidence,
(Since plainly no such life was liveable)
How these phenomena should class ?
Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,
Or never was at all, or whether
He was and was not, both together—
It matters little for the name,
So the Idea be left the same.
Only, for practical purpose' sake,
'Twas obviously as well to take
The popular story,—understanding
How the ineptitude of the time,
And the penman's prejudice, expanding
Fact into fable fit for the clime,
Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it

Into this myth, this Individuum,—
Which, when reason had strained and abated it

Of foreign matter, gave, for residuum,
A Man !—a right true man, however,
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour :

Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient

To his disciples, for rather believing
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
His word, their tradition,—which, though it meant

Something entirely different
From all that those who only heard it,
In their simplicity thought and averred it,

Had yet a meaning quite as respectable :
 For, among other doctrines delectable,
 Was he not surely the first to insist on
 The natural sovereignty of our race ?—
 Herethelecturer came to a pausing-place.
 And while his cough, like a drouthy
 piston,
 Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to
 him,
 I seized the occasion of bidding adieu
 to him,
 The vesture still within my hand.

XVI.

I could interpret its command.
 This time He would not bid me enter
 The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
 Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
 When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
 Impregnating its pristine clarity,
 —One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
 Its gust of broken meat and garlic ;
 —One, by his soul's too-much presuming
 To turn the frankincense's fuming
 And vapours of the candle starlike
 Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
 Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
 May poison it for healthy breathing—
 But the Critic leaves no air to poison ;
 Pumps out by a ruthless ingenuity
 Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
 Thus much of Christ, does he reject ?
 And what retain ? His intellect ?
 What is it I must reverence duly ?
 Poor intellect for worship, truly,
 Which tells me simply what was told
 (If mere morality, bereft
 Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
 Elsewhere by voices manifold ;
 With this advantage, that the stater
 Made nowise the important stumble
 Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
 Was also one with the Creator.
 You urge Christ's followers' simplicity :
 But how does shifting blame, evade it ?
 Have wisdom's words no more felicity ?
 The stumbling-block, His speech—who
 laid it ?
 How comes it that for one found able
 To sift the truth of it from fable,
 Millions believe it to the letter ?
 Christ's goodness, then—does that fare
 better ?

Strange goodness, which upon the
 score

Of being goodness, the mere due
 Of man to fellow-man, much more
 To God,—should take another view
 Of its possessor's privilege,
 And bid him rule his race ! You pledge
 Your fealty to such rule ? What, all—
 From Heavenly John and Attic Paul,
 And that brave weather-battered Peter
 Whose stout faith only stood completer
 For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
 As the more his hands hauled nets, they
 hardened,—

All, down to you, the man of men,
 Professing here at Göttingen,
 Compose Christ's flock ! They, you and I,
 Are sheep of a good man ! and why ?
 The goodness,—how did he acquire it ?
 Was it self-gained, did God inspire it ?
 Choose which ; then tell me, on what
 ground

Should its possessor dare propound
 His claim to rise o'er us an inch ?
 Were goodness all some man's invention,
 Who arbitrarily made mention
 What we should follow, and where
 finch,—

What qualities might take the style
 Of right and wrong,—and had such
 guessing

Met with as general acquiescing
 As graced the Alphabet erewhile,
 When A got leave an Ox to be,
 No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,—
 For thus inventing thing and title
 Worship were that man's fit requital.
 But if the common conscience must
 Be ultimately judge, adjust
 Its apt name to each quality
 Already known,—I would decree
 Worship for such mere demonstration
 And simple work of nomenclature,
 Only the day I praised, not Nature,
 But Harvey, for the circulation.
 I would praise such a Christ, with pride
 And joy, that he, as none beside,
 Had taught us how to keep the mind
 God gave him, as God gave his kind,
 Freer than they from fleshly taint :
 I would call such a Christ our Saint,
 As I declare our Poet, him
 Whose insight makes all others dim :

A thousand poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare: each shall
take

His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake—
Though some objected—'Had we seen
The heart and head of each, what screen
Was broken there to give them light,
While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
We should no more admire, perchance,
That these found truth out at a glance,
Than marvel how the bat discerns
Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
Led by a finer tact, a gift

He boasts, which other birds must shift
Without, and grope as best they can.'
No, freely I would praise the man,—
Nor one whit more, if he contended
That gift of his, from God, descended.
Ah, friend, what gift of man's does not ?
No nearer Something, by a jot,
Rise an infinity of Nothings
Than one: take Euclid for your teacher:
Distinguish kinds: do crownings,
clothings,

Make that Creator which was creature ?
Multiply gifts upon his head,
And what, when all's done, shall be
said

But—the more gifted he, I ween !
That one's made Christ, this other,
Pilate,

And This might be all That has been,—
So what is there to frown or smile at ?
What is left for us, save, in growth
Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
From the gift looking to the Giver,
And from the cistern to the River,
And from the finite to Infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity ?

XVII.

Take all in a word: the truth in God's
breast

Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
Though He is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in His image to witness
Him;

And were no eye in us to tell,
Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of Heaven from the dark of
Hell,
That light would want its evidence,—

Though Justice, Good and Truth were
still

Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and Right
misnamed.

No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship,
therefore:

And, if no better proof you will care for,
—Whom do you count the worst man
upon earth ?

Be sure, he knows, in his conscience,
more

Of what Right is, than arrives at
birth

In the best man's acts that we bow
before:

This last *knows* better—true, but my
fact is,

'Tis one thing to know, and another to
practise.

And thence I conclude that the real God-
function

Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already,
And such an injunction and such a
motive

As the God in Christ, do you waive, and
'heady,

High-minded, 'hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post ?

Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need *we* prove would avail no jot
To make Him God, if God He were
not ?

What is the point where Himself lays
stress ?

Does the precept run 'Believe in Good,
In Justice, Truth, now understood
For the first time ?'—or, 'Believe in
ME,

Who lived and died, yet essentially
Am Lord of Life ?' Whoever can
take

The same to his heart and for mere
love's sake

Conceive of the love,—that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII.

Can it be that He stays inside ?
Is the vesture left me to commune with ?
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune
with

Even at this lecture, if she tried ?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathize
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain's white roots
Without a throb for Christ's attributes,
As the Lecturer makes his special boast !
If love 's dead there, it has left a ghost.
Admire we, how from heart to brain
(Though to say so strike the doctors
dumb)

One instinct rises and falls again,
Restoring the equilibrium.
And how when the Critic had done his
best,

And the Pearl of Price, at reason's test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the Professor's lecture-table ;
When we looked for the inference and
monition

That our faith, reduced to such a con-
dition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-
hole,—

He bids us, when we least expect it,
Take back our faith,—if it be not just
whole,

Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
Which fact pays the damage done
rewardingly,

So, prize we our dust and ashes accord-
ingly !

' Go home and venerate the Myth
I thus have experimented with—
This Man, continue to adore him
Rather than all who went before him,
And all who ever followed after ! '—
Surely for this I may praise you, my
brother !

Will you take the praise in tears or
laughter ?

That 's one point gained : can I com-
pass another ?

Unlearned love was safe from spurning—
Can't we respect your loveless learning ?
Let us at least give Learning honour !
What laurels had we showered upon
her,

Girding her loins up to perturb
Our theory of the Middle Verb ;
Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar
O'er anapaests in comic-trimeter ;
Or curing the halt and maimed Iketides,
While we lounged on at our indebted
ease :

Instead of which, a tricky demon
Sets her at Titus or Philemon !
When Ignorance wags his ears of leather
And hates God's word, 'tis altogether ;
Nor leaves he his congenial stibles
To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
—And you, the audience, who might
ravage

The world wide, enviably savage,
Nor heed the cry of the retriever,
More than Herr Heine (before his
fever),—

I do not tell a lie so arrant
As say my passion's wings are furled up,
And, without the plainest Heavenly
warrant,

I were ready and glad to give this
world up—

But still, when you rub the brow
meticulous,
And ponder the profit of turning holy
If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
—God forbid I should find you ridicu-
lous !

Deduce from this lecture all that cases
you,
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases
you,

' Christians,' — abhor the Deist's
pravity,—

Go on, you shall no more move my
gravity,

Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse
I find it in my heart to embarrass them
By hinting that their stick 's a mockhorse,
And they really carry what they say
carries them.

XIX.

So sat I talking with my mind.
I did not long to leave the door
And find new church, as before,
But rather was quiet and inclined
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting
From further tracking and trying and
testing.

This tolerance is a genial mood !
(Said I, and a little pause ensued).
One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and
shelf,

And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
A value for religion's self,
A carelessness about the sects of it.
Let me enjoy my own conviction,
Not watch my neighbour's faith with
fretfulness,

Still spying there some dereliction
Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness !
Better a mild indifferentism,
Teaching that all our faiths (though
duller

His shine through a dull spirit's prism)
Originally had one colour—
Sending me on a pilgrimage
Through ancient and through modern
times

To many peoples, various climes,
Where I may see Saint, Savage, Sage
Fuse their respective creeds in one
Before the general Father's throne !

XX.

—'Twas the horrible storm began afresh !
The black night caught me in his mesh
Whirled me up, and flung me prone.
I was left on the college-step alone.
I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
Far, far away, the receding gesture,
And looming of the lessening vesture !—
Swept forward from my stupid hand,
While I watched my foolish heart ex-
pand

In the lazy glow of benevolence,
O'er the various modes of man's belief.
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
—Needs must there be one way, our
chief

Best way of worship : let me strive
To find it, and when found, contrive
My fellows also take their share !
This constitutes my earthly care :
God's is above it and distinct.
For I, a man, with men am linked,
And not a brute with brutes ; no
gain

That I experience, must remain
Unshared : but should my best en-
deavour

To share it, fail—subsisteth ever

God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult,
May—doth, I will believe—bring back
All wanderers to a single track.
Meantime, I can but testify
God's care for me—no more, can I—
It is but for myself I *know* ;
The world rolls witnessing around me
Only to leave me as it found me ;
Men cry there, but my ear is slow :
Their races flourish or decay
—What boots it, while yon lucid way
Loaded with stars, divides the vault ?
But soon my soul repairs its fault
When, sharpening sense's hebetude,
She turns on my own life ! So viewed,
No mere mote's-breadth but teems
immense

With witnessings of Providence :
And woe to me if when I look
Upon that record, the sole book
Unsealed to me, I take no heed
Of any warning that I read !
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from heaven slid
Into my soul ?—I cannot bid
The world admit He stooped to heal
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal
Where one heard noise, and one saw
flame,

I only knew He named my name :
But what is the world to me, for sorrow
Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow
It drops the remark, with just-turned
head

Then, on again—that man is dead ?
Yes, but for me—my name called,—
drawn
As a conscript's lot from the lap's black
yawn,

He has dipt into on a battle-dawn :
Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—
Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's
chance,—

With a rapid finger circled round,
Fixed to the first poor inch of ground
To fight from, where his foot was
found ;

Whose ear but a minute since lay
free

To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—
Summoned, a solitary man,

To end his life where his life began,
From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful
van !

Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
By the hem of the vesture !—

XXI.

And I caught
At the flying robe, and unrepelled
Was lapped again in its folds full-
fraught

With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
For scarce had the words escaped my
tongue,

When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
Out of the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt up-
right

On my bench, as if I had never left it ?
—Never flung out on the common at
night

Nor met the storm and wedge-like
cleft it,

Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
Or the laboratory of the Professor !
For the Vision, *that* was true, I wist,
True as that heaven and earth exist.

There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the self-
same place ;

Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed
gall,

She had slid away a contemptuous
space :

And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mis-
takable,

Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I had nodded betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine
in number,

And woke up now at the tenth and
lastly.

But again, could such a disgrace have
happened ?

Each friend at my elbow had surely
nudged it ;

And, as for the sermon, where did my
nap end ?

Unless I heard it, could I have judged
it ?

Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his
nose :

Second, his gesture is too emphatic :
Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
The subject-matter itself lacks logic :

Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
Great news ! the preacher is found no
Pascal,

Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task
call

Of making square to a finite eye
The circle of infinity,

And find so all-but-just-succeeding !
Great news ! the sermon proves no
reading

Where bee-like in the flowers I may
bury me,

Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy !
And now that I know the very worst of
him,

What was it I thought to obtain at first
of him ?

Ha ! Is God mocked, as He asks ?
Shall I take on me to change His tasks,
And dare, dispatched to a river-head
For a simple draught of the element,

Neglect the thing for which He sent,
And return with another thing instead ?—
Saying, ' Because the water found

Welling up from underground,
Is mingled with the taints of earth,
While Thou, I know, dost laugh at
dearth,

And couldest, at a word, convulse
The world with the leap of its river-
pulse,—

Therefore I turned from the oozeings
muddy,

And bring thee a chalice I found,
instead :

See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy !
One would suppose that the marble bled.

What matters the water ? A hope I
have nursed,

That the waterless cup will quench my
thirst.'

—Better have knelt at the poorest
stream

That trickles in pain from the straitest rift !

For the less or the more is all God's gift,
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.

And here, is there water or not, to drink?
I, then, in ignorance and weakness,
Taking God's help, have attained to think

My heart does best to receive in meekness
That mode of worship, as most to His mind,

Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene
With the thinnest human veil between,
Letting the mystic Lamps, the Seven,
The many motions of His spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from Heaven.
For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer ;
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure ?

Heaven soon sets right all other matters !--

Ask, also, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort, can I doubt,
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.

May it be mine ! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befell the Pope,
Turn'd sick at last of the day's buffoonery,
Of its posturings and its petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !
Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Göttingen, presently, when, in the dusk
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,

Propheesied of by that horrible husk ;
When, thicker and thicker, the darkness fills

The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial

Than a fable, myth, or personification,—
May Christ do for him, what no mere man shall,

And stand confessed as the God of salvation !

Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,

Without my own made—I choose here !
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me ;

I have done !—And if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
Or, worse, that I trench, with undue levity,

On the bounds of the holy and the awful,—

I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,

And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,

Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter
When the frothy spume and frequent sputter

Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !

May the truth shine out, stand ever before us !

I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tunc, without further apology,

The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn in Whitfield's Collection,

To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY

I.

How very hard it is to be
A Christian ! Hard for you and me,
—Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal,
Effecting thus, complete and whole,
A purpose of the human soul—
For that is always hard to do ;
But hard, I mean, for me and you
To realize it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the aims of life.

'This aim is greater,' you will say,
'And so more arduous every way.'
—But the importance of their fruits
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,

Proportional encouragement.

'Then, what if it be God's intent
That labour to this one result
Should seem unduly difficult ?'
Ah, that's a question in the dark—
And the sole thing that I remark
Upon the difficulty, this ;
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race :
As we proceed, it shifts its place,
And where we looked for crowns to fall,
We find the tug 's to come,—that 's all.

II.

At first you say, 'The whole, or chief
Of difficulties, is Belief.
Could I believe once thoroughly,
The rest were simple. What ? Am I
An idiot, do you think,—a beast ?
Prove to me, only that the least
Command of God is God's indeed,
And what injunction shall I need
To pay obedience ? Death so nigh,
When time must end, eternity
Begin,—and cannot I compute,
Weigh loss and gain together, suit
My actions to the balance drawn,
And give my body to be sawn
Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied
To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,
Like any martyr of the list ?
How gladly !—if I made acquit,
Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,
Of God's eternity of joy.'

III.

—And certainly you name the point
Whereon all turns : for could you joint
This flexible finite life once tight
Into the fixed and infinite,
You, safe inside, would spurn what 'sout,
With carelessness enough, no doubt—
Would spurn mere life : but when time
brings
To their next stage your reasonings,
Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink
Nor see the path so well, I think.

IV.

You say, 'Faith may be, one agrees,
A touchstone for God's purposes,
Even as ourselves conceive of them.
Could He acquit us or condemn

For holding what no hand can loose,
Rejecting when we can't but choose ?
As well award the victor's wreath
To whosoever should take breath
Duly each minute while he lived—
Grant Heaven, because a man contrived
To see its sunlight every day
He walked forth on the public way.
You must mix some uncertainty
With faith, if you would have faith be.
Why, what but faith, do we abhor
And idolize each other for—
Faith in our evil, or our good,
Which is or is not understood
Aright by those we love or those
We hate, thence called our friends or
foes ?

Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,
When, turning from the ugly face,
I found belief in it too hard ;
And she and I have our reward.
—Yet here a doubt peeps : well for us
Weak beings, to go using thus
A touchstone for our little ends,
Trying with faith the foes and friends ;
—But God, bethink you ! I would fain
Conceive of the Creator's reign
As based upon exacter laws
Than creatures build by with applause.
In all God's acts—(as Plato cries
He doth)—He *should* geometrize.
Whence, I desiderate . . .'

V.

I see !

You would grow as a natural tree,
Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
The world's so perfect and entire.
Quite above faith, so right and fit !
Go there, walk up and down in it !
No. The creation travails, groans—
Contrive your music from its moans,
Without or let or hindrance, friend !
That's an old story, and its end
As old—you come back (be sincere)
With every question you put here
(Here where there once was, and is
still,
We think, a living oracle,
Whose answers you stand carping at)
This time flung back unanswered flat,—
Besides, perhaps, as many more
As those that drove you out before,

Now added, where was little need !
 Questions impossible, indeed,
 To us who sat still, all and each
 Persuaded that our earth had speech
 Of God's, writ down, no matter if
 In cursive type or hieroglyph,—
 Which one fact freed us from the yoke
 Of guessing why He never spoke.
 You come back in no better plight
 Than when you left us,—am I right ?

VI.

So, the old process, I conclude,
 Goes on, the reasoning's pursued
 Further. You own, 'Tis well averred,
 A scientific faith's absurd,
 —Frustrates the very end 'twas meant
 To serve. So, I would rest content
 With a mere probability,
 But, probable; the chance must lie
 Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,
 So long as there be just enough
 To pin my faith to, though it hap
 Only at points: from gap to gap
 One hangs up a huge curtain so,
 Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
 Foldless and flat along the wall.
 —What care I if some interval
 Of life less plainly may depend
 On God ? I'd hang there to the end ;
 And thus I should not find it hard
 To be a Christian and debarred
 From trailing on the earth, till furled
 Away by death.—Renounce the world !
 Were that a mighty hardship ? Plan
 A pleasant life, and straight some man
 Beside you, with, if he thought fit,
 Abundant means to compass it,
 Shall turn deliberate aside
 To try and live as, if you tried
 You clearly might, yet most despise.
 One friend of mine wears out his
 eyes,

Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
 In patient hope that, ten years hence,
 "Somewhat completer," he may say,
 "My list of *coleoptera* !"

While just the other who most laughs
 At him, above all epitaphs
 Aspires to have his tomb describe
 Himself as Sole among the tribe
 Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed
 A Grignon with the Regent's crest.

So that, subduing, as you want,
 Whatever stands predominant
 Among my earthly appetites
 For tastes, and smells, and sounds, and
 sights.

I shall be doing that alone,
 To gain a palm-branch and a throne,
 Which fifty people undertake
 To do, and gladly, for the sake
 Of giving a Semitic guess,
 Or playing pawns at blindfold chess.'

VII.

Good ! and the next thing is,—look
 round

For evidence enough. 'Tis found,
 No doubt: as is your sort of mind,
 So is your sort of search—you'll find
 What you desire, and that's to be
 A Christian. What says history ?
 How comforting a point it were
 To find some mummy-scrap declare
 There lived a Moses ! Better still,
 Prove Jonah's whale translatable
 Into some quicksand of the seas,
 Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,
 That faith might clap her wings and crow
 From such an eminence ! Or, no—
 The human heart's best ; you prefer
 Making that prove the minister
 To truth; you probe its wants and needs,
 And hopes and fears, then try what
 creeds

Meet these most aptly,—resolute
 That faith plucks such substantial fruit
 Wherever these two correspond
 She little needs to look beyond,
 And puzzle out who Orpheus was,
 Or Dionysius Zagrias.
 You'll find sufficient, as I say,
 To satisfy you either way ;
 You wanted to believe ; your pains
 Are crowned—you do: and what re-
 mains ?

'Renounce the world !'—Ah, were it
 done

By merely cutting one by one
 Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
 How easy were it !—how soon past,
 If once in the believing mood !
 'Such is man's usual gratitude,
 Such thanks to God do we return,
 For not exacting that we spurn

A single gift of life, forego
 One real gain,—only taste them so
 With gravity and temperance,
 That those mild virtues may enhance
 Such pleasures, rather than abstract—
 Last spice of which, will be the fact
 Of love discerned in every gift;
 While, when the scene of life shall shift,
 And the gay heart be taught to ache,
 As sorrows and privations take
 The place of joy,—the thing that seems
 Mere misery, under human schemes,
 Becomes, regarded by the light
 Of love, as very near, or quite
 As good a gift as joy before.
 So plain is it that, all the more
 God's dispensation's merciful,
 More pettishly we try and cull
 Briars, thistles, from our private plot,
 'To mar God's ground where thorns are
 not !'

VIII.

Do you say this, or I ?—Oh, you !
 Then, what, my friend,—(thus I pursue
 Our parley)—you indeed opine
 That the Eternal and Divine
 Did, eighteen centuries ago,
 In very truth . . . Enough ! you know
 The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth,
 That Life, that Death ! And all, the
 earth
 Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew
 black

Rather than see ; all, Nature's rack
 And thro' at dissolution's brink
 Attested,—all took place, you think,
 Only to give our joys a zest,
 And prove our sorrows for the best ?
 We differ, then ! Were I, still pale
 And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,
 Waiting to hear God's voice declare
 What horror followed for my share,
 As implicated in the deed,
 Apart from other sins,—concede
 That if He blacked out in a blot
 My brief life's pleasantness, 'twere not
 So very disproportionate !
 Or there might be another fate—
 I certainly could understand
 (If fancies were the thing in hand)
 How God might save, at that Day's price,
 The impure in their impurities,

Give formal licence and complete
 To choose the fair and pick the sweet.
 But there be certain words, broad,
 plain,
 Uttered again and yet again,
 Hard to mistake, or overgloss—
 Announcing this world's gain for loss,
 And bidding us reject the same :
 The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
 In wickedness,—come out of it !
 Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
 But I who thrill through every nerve
 At thought of what deaf ears deserve,—
 How do you counsel in the case ?

IX.

'I'd take, by all means, in your place,
 The safe side, since it so appears :
 Deny myself, a few brief years,
 The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
 Or cut the plant up by the root.
 Remember what a martyr said
 On the rude tablet overhead !
 "I was born sickly, poor and mean,
 A slave : no misery could screen
 The holders of the pearl of price
 From Caesar's envy ; therefore twice
 I fought with beasts, and three times
 saw

My children suffer by his law ;
 At last my own release was earned :
 I was some time in being burned,
 But at the close a Hand came through
 The fire above my head, and drew
 My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
 Sergius, a brother, writes for me
 This testimony on the wall—
 For me, I have forgot it all."
 You say right ; this were not so hard !
 And since one nowise is debarred
 From this, why not escape some sins
 By such a method ?'

X.

Then begins
 To the old point, revulsion new—
 (For 'tis just this, I bring you to)
 If after all we should mistake,
 And so renounce life for the sake
 Of death and nothing else ? You hear
 Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer
 Back to ourselves with good effect—
 'There were my beetles to collect !'

' My box—a trifle, I confess,
But here I hold it, ne'ertheless !'
Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
And answer) we, the better part
Have chosen, though 'twere only
hope, —

Nor envy moles like you that grope
Amid your veritable muck,
More than the grasshoppers would
truck,

For yours, their passionate life away,
That spends itself in leaps all day
To reach the sun, you want the eyes
To see, as they the wings to rise
And match the noble hearts of them !
Thus the contemner we condemn, —
And, when doubt strikes us, thus we
ward

Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
—Not struck enough to overturn
Our faith, but shake it—make us
learn

What I began with, and, I wis,
End, having proved,—how hard it is
To be a Christian !

XI.

' Proved, or not,
Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
You get of mine, for taking pains
To make it hard to me. Who gains
By that, I wonder ? Here I live
In trusting ease ; and here you drive
At causing me to lose what most
Yourself would mourn for had you
lost !'

XII.

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
You leave St. Paul for Aeschylus ?
—Who made his Titan's arch-device
The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
The meal of life with, else devoured
In bitter haste, while lo ! death loured
Before them at the platter's edge !
If faith should be, as I allege,
Quite other than a condiment
To heighten flavours with, or meant
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)
To take at need the victuals' place ?
If, having dined, you would digest
Besides, and turning to your rest
Should find instead . . .

XIII.

Now, you shall see
And judge if a mere foppery
Pricks on my speaking ! I resolve
To utter . . . yes, it shall devolve
On you to hear as solemn, strange
And dread a thing as in the range
Of facts,—or fancies, if God will—
E'er happened to our kind ! I still
Stand in the cloud, and while it wraps
My face, ought not to speak, perhaps ;
Seeing that if I carry through
My purpose, if my words in you
Find a live actual listener,
My story, reason must aver
False after all—the happy chance !
While, if each human countenance
I meet in London day by day,
Be what I fear,—my warnings fray
No one, and no one they convert,
And no one helps me to assert
How hard it is to really be
A Christian, and in vacancy
I pour this story !

XIV.

I commence
By trying to inform you, whence
It comes that every Easter-night
As now, I sit up, watch, till light,
Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
Give, through my window-pane, grey
proofs
That Easter-day is breaking slow.
On such a night, three years ago,
It chanced that I had cause to cross
The common, where the chapel was,
Our friend spoke of, the other day—
You've not forgotten, I dare say.
I fell to musing of the time
So close, the blessed matin-prime
All hearts leap up at, in some guise—
One could not well do otherwise.
Insensibly my thoughts were bent
Toward the main point ; I overwent
Much the same ground of reasoning
As you and I just now. One thing
Remained, however—one that tasked
My soul to answer ; and I asked,
Fairly and frankly, what might be
That History, that Faith, to me
—Me there—not me in some domain
Built up and peopled by my brain,

Weighing its merits as one weighs
 Mere theories for blame or praise,
 —The kingcraft of the Lucumons,
 Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and
 cons,—

But *my faith there*, or none at all.
 'How were my case, now, did I fall
 Dead here, this minute—should I lie
 Faithful or faithless?'—Note that I
 Inclined thus ever!—little prone
 For instance, when I lay alone
 In childhood, to go calm to sleep
 And leave a closet where might keep
 His watch perdue some murderer
 Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir,
 As good, authentic legends tell:
 'He might: but how improbable!
 How little likely to deserve
 The pains and trial to the nerve
 Of thrusting head into the dark!'—
 Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark
 Beside, that, should the dreadful scout
 Really lie hid there, and leap out
 At first turn of the rusty key,
 Mine were small gain that she could see,
 Killed not in bed but on the floor,
 And losing one night's sleep the more.
 I tell you, I would always burst
 The door ope, know my fate at first.
 This time, indeed, the closet penned
 No such assassin: but a friend
 Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit
 For counsel, Common Sense, to wit,
 Who said a good deal that might pass,—
 Heartening, impartial too, it was,
 Judge else: 'For, soberly now,—who
 Should be a Christian if not you?'
 (Hear how he smoothed me down.)

'One takes
 A whole life, sees what course it makes
 Mainly, and not by fits and starts—
 In spite of stoppage which imparts
 Fresh value to the general speed.
 A life, with none, would fly indeed:
 Your progressing is slower—right!
 We deal with progress and not flight,
 Through baffling senses passionate,
 Fancies as restless,—with a freight
 Of knowledge cumbersome enough
 To sink your ship when waves grow
 rough,
 Though meant for ballast in the hold,—
 I find, 'mid dangers manifold,

The good bark answers to the helm
 Where faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm
 Than some stout peasant's heavenly
 guide,

Whose hard head could not, if it tried,
 Conceive a doubt, nor understand
 How senses hornier than his hand
 Should 'tice the Christian off his guard.
 More happy! But shall we award
 Less honour to the hull which, dogged
 By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,
 Masts by the board, her bulwarks gone,
 And stanchions going, yet bears on,—
 Than to mere life-boats, built to save,
 And triumph o'er the breaking wave?
 Make perfect your good ship as these,
 And what were her performances!'—
 I added—'Would the ship reach home!
 I wish indeed "God's kingdom come—"
 The day when I shall see appear
 His bidding, as my duty, clear
 From doubt! And it shall dawn, that
 day,

Some future season; Easter may
 Prove, not impossibly, the time—
 Yes, that were striking—fates would
 chime

So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring
 The Judgment!—deeper in the Spring
 Than now, however, when there's snow
 Capping the hills; for earth must show
 All signs of meaning to pursue
 Her tasks as she was wont to do
 —The skylark, taken by surprise
 As we ourselves, shall recognize
 Sudden the end. For suddenly
 It comes; the dreadfulness must be
 In that; all warrants the belief—
 "At night it cometh like a thief."
 I fancy why the trumpet blows;
 —Plainly, to wake one. From repose
 We shall start up, at last awake
 From life, that insane dream we take
 For waking now, because it seems.
 And as, when now we wake from dreams,
 We laugh, while we recall them, "Fool,
 To let the chance slip, linger cool
 When such adventure offered! Just
 A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
 Aside, a wicked mage to stab—
 And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab!"—
 So shall we marvel why we grudged
 Our labour here, and idly judged

Of Heaven, we might have gained, but
lose !

Lose ? Talk of loss, and I refuse
To plead at all ! You speak no worse
Nor better than my ancient nurse
When she would tell me in my youth
I well deserved that shapes uncouth
Frighted and teased me in my sleep—
Why could I not in memory keep
Her precept for the evil's cure ?
"Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
You'll wake forthwith !"

XV.

And as I said
This nonsense, throwing back my head
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of heaven had
stood

As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
Of ripples infinite and black,
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment)
'There—

Burn it !' And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core. till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
As fanned to measure equable,—
As when great conflagrations kill
Night overheard, and rise and sink,
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network—then, each
cleft

The fire had been sucked back into,
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly. On every side
Caught past escape, the earth was lit ;
As if a dragon's nostril split

And all his famished ire o'erflowed ;
Then, as he winced at his lord's goad,
Back he inhaled : whereat I found
The clouds into vast pillars bound,
Based on the corners of the earth,
Propping the skies at top : a dearth
Of fire i' the violet intervals,
Leaving exposed the utmost walls
Of time, about to tumble in
And end the world.

XVI.

I felt begin
The Judgment-Day : to retrocede
Was too late now. 'In very deed,'
(I uttered to myself) 'that Day !'
The intuition burned away
All darkness from my spirit too :
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
Choosing the world. The choice was
made ;

And naked and disguiseless stayed,
And unevadable, the fact.
My brain held ne'ertheless compact
Its senses, nor my heart declined
Its office ; rather, both combined
To help me in this juncture. I
Lost not a second,—agony
Gave boldness : since my life had end
And my choice with it—best defend,
Applaud both ! I resolved to say,
'So was I framed by Thee, such way
I put to use Thy senses here !
It was so beautiful, so near,
Thy world,—what could I then but
choose

My part there ? Nor did I refuse
To look above the transient boon
Of time ; but it was hard so soon
As in a short life, to give up
Such beauty : I could put the cup
Undrained of half its fulness, by ;
But, to renounce it utterly,
—That was too hard ! Nor did the cry
Which bade renounce it, touch my
brain

Authentically deep and plain
Enough to make my lips let go.
But Thou, who knowest all, dost know
Whether I was not, life's brief while,
Endeavouring to reconcile
Those lips (too tardily, alas !)
To letting the dear remnant pass,

One day,—some drops of earthly good
Untasted ! Is it for this mood,
That Thou, whose earth delights so well,
Hast made its complement a hell ? ’

XVII.

A final belch of fire like blood,
Overbroke all heaven in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a Voice
Beside me spoke thus, ‘ Life is done,
Time ends, Eternity ’s begun,
And thou art judged for evermore. ’

XVIII.

I looked up ; all seemed as before ;
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead,
No trace was left : I saw instead
The common round me, and the sky
Above, stretched drear and empty
Of life. ’Twas the last watch of night,
Except what brings the morning quite ;
When the armed angel, conscience-clear,
His task nigh done, leans o’er his spear
And gazes on the earth he guards,
Safe one night more through all its
wards,

Till God relieve him at his post.
‘ A dream—a waking dream at most ! ’
(I spoke out quick, that I might shake
The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)
‘ The world gone, yet the world is here ?
Are not all things as they appear ?
Is Judgment past for me alone ?
—And where had place the great white
throne ?

The rising of the quick and dead ?
Where stood they, small and great ?
Who read

The sentence from the opened book ? ’
So, by degrees, the blood forsook
My heart, and let it beat afresh ;
I knew I should break through the mesh
Of horror, and breathe presently :
When, lo, again, the Voice by me !

XIX.

I saw . . . Oh, brother, ’mid far sands
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-
blue,
Leans o’er it, while the years pursue

Their course, unable to abate
Its paradisaal laugh at fate !
One morn,—the Arab staggers blind
O’er a new tract of death, calcined
To ashes, silence, nothingness,—
And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
Whence fell the blow. What if, ’twixt
skies

And prostrate earth, he should surprise
The imaged vapour, head to foot,
Surveying, motionless and mute,
Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt,
It vanish up again ? So hapt
My chance. He stood there. Like the
smoke

Pillared o’er Sodom, when day broke,—
I saw Him. One magnific pall
Mantled in massive fold and fall
His dread, and coiled in snaky swathes
About His feet : night’s black that
bathes

All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within—
That wrapped right hand which bared
the chin,

That intense meditation fixed
On His procedure,—pity mixed
With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus, He spoke to me,
Who fell before His feet, a mass,
No man now.

XX.

‘ All is come to pass.
Such shows are over for each soul
They had respect to. In the roll
Of Judgment which convinced mankind
Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
Terror must burn the truth into :
Their fate for them !—thou hadst to do
With absolute omnipotence,
Able its judgments to dispense
To the whole race, as every one
Were its sole object. Judgment done,
God is, thou art,—the rest is hurled
To nothingness for thee. This world,
This finite life, thou hast preferred,
In disbelief of God’s own word,
To Heaven and to Infinity.
Here the probation was for thee,
To show thy soul the earthly mixed
With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.

The earthly joys lay palpable,—
A taint, in each, distinct as well ;
The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
Above them, but as truly were
Taintless, so, in their nature, best.
Thy choice was earth : thou didst attest
'Twas fitter spirit should subserve
The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
No claim to their inheritance
Who chose the spirit's fugitive
Brief gleams, and yearned, "This were
to live

Indeed, if rays, completely pure
From flesh that dulls them, could endure,—

Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
Our earth, to show how cold and swart
It lies beneath their fire, but stand
As stars do, destined to expand,
Prove veritable worlds, our home !"
Thou saidst,—“ Let spirit star the dome
Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
No nook of earth,—I shall not seek
Its service further ! ” Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit ; glut
Thy sense upon the world : 'tis thine
For ever—take it ! ’

XXI.

‘ How ? Is mine,
The world ? ’ (I cried, while my soul
broke
Out in a transport,) ‘ Hast Thou spoke
Plainly in that ? Earth's exquisite
Treasures of wonder and delight,
For me ? ’

XXII.

The austere Voice returned,—
‘ So soon made happy ? Hadst thou
learned
What God accounteth happiness,
Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
What hell may be His punishment
For those who doubt if God invent
Better than they. Let such men rest
Content with what they judged the
best.

Let the unjust usurp at will :
The filthy shall be filthy still :
Miser, there waits the gold for thee !
Hater, indulge thine enmity !

And thou, whose heaven self-ordained
Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,
Do it ! Take all the ancient show !
The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
And men apparently pursue
Their works, as they were wont to do,
While living in probation yet.
I promise not thou shalt forget
The Past, now gone to its account ;
But leave thee with the old amount
Of faculties, nor less nor more,
Unvisited, as heretofore,
By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
So, once more, take thy world ! expend
Eternity upon its shows,—
Flung thee as freely as one rose
Out of a summer's opulence,
Over the Eden-barrier whence
Thou art excluded. Knock in vain ! ’

XXIII.

I sat up. All was still again.
I breathed free : to my heart, back fled
The warmth. ‘ But, all the world ! ’
(I said)

I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
And recollected I might learn
From books, how many myriad sorts
Of fern exist, to trust reports,
Each as distinct and beautiful
As this, the very first I cull.
Think, from the first leaf to the last !
Conceive, then, earth's resources ! Vast
Exhaustless beauty, endless change
Of wonder ! and this foot shall range
Alps, Andes,—and this eye devour
The bee-bird and the aloe-flower ?

XXIV.

Then the Voice, ‘ Welcome so to rate
The arras-folds that variegate
The earth, God's antechamber, well !
The wise, who waited there, could tell
By these, what royalties in store
Lay one step past the entrance-door.
For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
This life's munificence ? For such
As thou,—a race, whereof scarce one
Was able, in a million,
To feel that any marvel lay
In objects round his feet all day ;
Scarce one, in many millions more,
Willing, if able, to explore

The secreter, minuter charm !
 —Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
 Of power to cope with God's intent,—
 Or scared if the south firmament
 With north-fire did its wings reflexed !
 All partial beauty was a pledge
 Of beauty in its plenitude :
 But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
 Retain it ! plenitude be theirs
 Who looked above !'

XXV.

Though sharp despairs
 Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
 'What matter though my trust were
 gone
 From natural things ? Henceforth my
 part
 Be less with Nature than with Art !
 For Art supplants, gives mainly worth
 To Nature ; 'tis Man stamps the earth—
 And I will seek his impress, seek
 The statuary of the Greek,
 Italy's painting—there my choicé
 Shall fix !'

XXVI.

'Obtain it !' said the Voice.
 —'The one form with its single act,
 Which sculptors laboured to abstract,
 The one face, painters tried to draw,
 With its one look, from throngs they saw.
 And that perfection in their soul,
 These only hinted at ? The whole,
 They were but parts of ? What each laid
 His claim to glory on ?—afraid
 His fellow-men should give him rank .
 By the poor tentatives he shrank
 Smitten at heart from, all the more,
 That gazers pressed in to adore !
 "Shall I be judged by only these ?"
 If such his soul's capacities,
 Even while he trod the earth,—think,
 now
 What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,
 With its new palace-brain where dwells
 Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
 That crumbled with the transient clay !
 What visions will his right hand's sway
 Still turn to form, as still they burst
 Upon him ? How will he quench thirst,
 Titanically infantine,
 Laid at the breast of the Divine ?

Does it confound thee,—this first page
 Emblazoning man's heritage ?—
 Can this alone absorb thy sight,
 As pages were not infinite,—
 Like the omnipotence which tasks
 Itself, to furnish all that asks
 The soul it means to satiate ?
 What was the world, the starry state
 Of the broad skies,—what, all displays
 Of power and beauty intermixed,
 Which now thy soul is chained betwix,—
 What else than needful furniture
 For life's first stage ? God's work, be
 sure,

No more spreads wasted, than falls scant :
 He filled, did not exceed, Man's want
 Of beauty in this life. But through
 Life pierce,—and what has earth to do,
 Its utmost beauty's appanage,
 With the requirement of next stage ?
 Did God pronounce earth "very good" ?
 Needs must it be, while understood
 For man's preparatory state ;
 Nothing to heighten nor abate :
 Transfer the same completeness here,
 To serve a new state's use,—and drear
 Deficiency gapes every side !
 The good, tried once, were bad, retired,
 See the enwrapping rocky niche,
 Sufficient for the sleep, in which
 The lizard breathes for ages safe :
 Split the mould—and as this would chafe
 The creature's new world-widened sense,
 One minute after day dispense
 The thousand sounds and sights that
 broke

In, on him, at the chisel's stroke,—
 So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff
 Was, neither more nor less, enough
 To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
 Man reckoned it immeasurable ?
 So thinks the lizard of his vault !
 Could God be taken in default,
 Short of contrivances, by you,—
 Or reached, ere ready to pursue
 His progress through eternity ?
 That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
 Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
 To nothingness for ever ; so,
 Has God abolished at a blow
 This world, wherein his saints were
 pent,—
 Who, though found grateful and content,

With the provision there, as thou,
Yet knew He would not disallow
Their spirit's hunger, felt as well,—
Unsated,—not unsatable,
As Paradise gives proof. Deride
Their choice now, thou who sit'st out-
side !'

XXVII.

I cried in anguish, ' Mind, the mind,
So miserably cast behind,
To gain what had been wisely lost !
Oh, let me strive to make the most
Of the poor stunted soul, I nipped
Of budding wings, else now equipt
For voyage from summer isle to isle !
And though she needs must reconcile
Ambition to the life on ground,
Still, I can profit by late found
But precious knowledge. Mind is best—
I will seize mind, forego the rest,
And try how far my tethered strength
May crawl in this poor breadth and
length.

Let me, since I can fly no more,
At least spin dervish-like about
(Till giddy rapture almost doubt
I fly) through circling sciences,
Philosophies and histories !
Should the whirl slacken there, then
verse,

Fining to music, shall asperse
Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
Intoxicate, half-break my chain !
Not joyless, though more favoured feet
Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
The floor. At least earth's bond is
broke !'

XXVIII.

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
' Let me alone ! No answer, pray,
To this ! I know what Thou wilt say !
All still is earth's,—to Know, as much
As Feel its truths, which if we touch
With sense, or apprehend in soul,
What matter ? I have reached the
goal—

" Where to does Knowledge serve !"
will burn

My eyes, too sure, at every turn !
I cannot look back now, nor stake
Bliss on the race, for running's sake.

The goal 's a ruin like the rest !'—
—' And so much worse thy latter quest,
(Added the Voice) ' that even on earth—
Whenever, in man's soul, had birth
Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
That pull the more into the less,
Making the finite comprehend
Infinity,—the bard would spend
Such praise alone, upon his craft,
As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
Goes to the craftsman who arranged
The seven strings, changed them and
rechanged—

Knowing it was the South that harped.
He felt his song, in singing, warped ;
Distinguished his and God's part :
whence

A world of spirit as of sense
Was plain to him, yet not too plain,
Which he could traverse, not remain
A guest in :—else were permanent
Heaven on earth, which its gleams were
meant

To sting with hunger for full light,—
Made visible in verse, despite
The veiling weakness,—truth by means
Of fable, showing while it screens,—
Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,
Was ever fable on outside.
Such gleams made bright the earth an age ;
Now, the whole sun's his heritage !
Take up thy world, it is allowed,
Thou who hast entered in the cloud !'

XXIX.

Then I—' Behold, my spirit bleeds,
Catches no more at broken reeds,—
But lilies flower those reeds above :
I let the world go, and take love !
Love survives in me, albeit those
I love be henceforth masks and shows ;
Not loving men and women : still
I mind how love repaired all ill,
Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth
amends
With parents, brothers, children,
friends !

Some semblance of a woman yet
With eyes to help me to forget,
Shall live with me ; and I will match
Departed love with love, attach
Its fragments to my whole, nor scorn
The poorest of the grains of corn

I save from shipwreck on this isle,
Trusting its barrenness may smile
With happy fruitful green one day,
More precious for the pains. I pray,
For love, then, only !

xxx.

At the word,
The Form, I looked to have been stirred
With pity and approval, rose
O'er me, as when the headsman throws
Axe over shoulder to make end—
I fell prone, letting Him expend
His wrath, while, thus, the inflicting Voice
Smote me. 'Is this thy final choice ?
Love is the best ? 'Tis somewhat late !
And all thou dost enumerate
Of power and beauty in the world,
The mightiness of love was curled
Inextricably round about.
Love lay within it and without,
To clasp thee,—but in vain ! Thy soul
Still shrunk from Him who made the
whole,

Still set deliberate aside
His love !—Now take love ! Well betide
Thy tardy conscience ! Haste to take
The show of love for the name's sake,
Remembering every moment Who
Beside creating thee unto
These ends, and these for thee, was said
To undergo death in thy stead
In flesh like thine : so ran the tale.
What doubt in thee could countervail
Belief in it ? Upon the ground
"That in the story had been found
Too much love ! How could God love so ?"
He who in all His works below
Adapted to the needs of man,
Made love the basis of the plan,—
Did love, as was demonstrated :
While man, who was so fit instead
To hate, as every day gave proof,—
Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,
Both could and did invent that scheme
Of perfect love—'twould well beseem
Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,
Not tally with God's usual ways !

xxxi.

And I cowered deprecatingly—
'Thou Love of God ! Or let me die,
Or grant what shall seem Heaven almost !
Let me not know that all is lost,

Though lost it be—leave me not tied
To this despair, this corpse-like bride !
Let that old life seem mine—no more—
With limitation as before,
With darkness, hunger, toil, distress :
Be all the earth a wilderness !
Only let me go on, go on,
Still hoping ever and anon
To reach one eve the Better Land !'

xxxii.

Then did the Form expand, expand—
I knew Him through the dread disguise,
As the whole God within his eyes
Embraced me.

xxxiii.

When I lived again,
The day was breaking,—the grey plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a vision ? False or true ?
Since then, three varied years are spent,
And commonly my mind is bent
To think it was a dream—be sure
A mere dream and distemperature—
The last day's watching: then the night,—
The shock of that strange Northern
Light

Set my head swimming, bred in me
A dream. And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare ; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, who may yet escape,
She knows, the fiend in angel's shape !
Thank God, no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said !
Still every now and then my head
Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows
drear

Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
And think, 'How dreadful to be grudged
No ease henceforth, as one that's judged,
Condemned to earth for ever, shut
From Heaven !'

But Easter-Day breaks ! But
Christ rises ! Mercy every way
Is infinite,—and who can say ?

SORDELLO

1840

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

Dear Friend,—Lct the next poem be introduced by your name, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like: but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others may one day think so: and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours, R. B.

LONDON, June 9, 1863.

BOOK THE FIRST

Who will, may hear Sordello's story
told:

His story? Who believes meshall behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the
end,

Like me: for as the friendless-people's
friend

Spied from his hill-top once, despite the
din

And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin
Named o' the Naked Arm, I single out
Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred
years.

Only believe me. Ye believe?

Verona . . . Never, I should warn you
first,

Of my own choice had this, if not the
worst

Yet not the best expedient, served to
tell

A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of
view,

The very man as he was wont to do,

And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see
the dim

Abysmal Past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment
past,

I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit
More in the secret than yourselves who
sit

Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
Your setters-forth of unexampled
themes,

Makers of quite new men, producing
them,

Would best chalk broadly on each
vesture's hem,

The wearer's quality; or take their
stand,

Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,
Beside him. So, for once I face ye,
friends,

Summoned together from the world's
four ends,

Dropped down from heaven or cast up
from hell,

To hear the story I propose to tell.

Confess now, poets know the dragnet's
 trick,
 Catching the dead, if fate denies the
 quick,
 And shaming her; 'tis not for fate to
 choose
 Silence or song because she can refuse
 Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to
 ache
 Less oft, real brows turn smoother for
 our sake :
 I have experienced something of her
 spite ;
 But there 's a realm wherein she has no
 right
 And I have many lovers. Say, but few
 Friends fate accords me? Here they are—
 now view
 The host I muster ! Many a lighted face
 Foul with no vestige of the grave's dis-
 grace ;
 What else should tempt them back to
 taste our air
 Except to see how their successors fare ?
 My audience ! and they sit, each ghostly
 man
 Striving to look as living as he can,
 Brother by breathing brother ; thou art
 set,
 Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not
 fret
 A wondrous soul of them, nor move
 death's spleen
 Who loves not to unlock them. Friends !
 I mean
 The living in good earnest—ye elect
 Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject
 Judicious praise, who contrary shall
 peep,
 Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye
 sleep,
 To glean your bland approvals. Then,
 appear,
 Verona ! stay—thou, spirit, come not
 near
 Now—not this time desert thy cloudy
 place
 To scare me, thus employed, with that
 pure face !
 I need not fear this audience, I make
 free
 With them, but then this is no place for
 thee !

The thunder-phrase of the Athenian,
 grown
 Up out of memories of Marathon,
 Would echo like his own sword's griding
 screech
 Braying a Persian shield,—the silver
 speech
 Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
 Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
 The knights to tilt,—wert thou to hear !
 What heart
 Have I to play my puppets, bear my
 part
 Before these worthies ?
 Lo, the Past is hurled
 In twain : up-thrust, out-staggering on
 the world,
 Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
 Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
 Verona. 'Tis six hundred years and
 more
 Since an event. The Second Friedrich
 wore
 The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
 The holy chair. That autumn eve was
 stilled :
 A last remains of sunset dimly burned
 O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame
 turned
 By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
 In one long flare of crimson ; as a brand,
 The woods beneath lay black. A single
 eye
 From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
 But, gathering in its ancient market-
 place,
 Talked group with restless group ; and
 not a face
 But wrath made livid, for among them
 were
 Death's staunch purveyors, such as
 have in care
 To feast him. Fear had long since
 taken root
 In every breast, and now these crushed
 its fruit,
 The ripe hate, like a wine : to note the
 way
 It worked while each grew drunk ! men
 grave and grey
 Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and
 fro,
 Letting the silent luxury trickle slow

About the hollows where a heart should be;

But the young gulped with a delirious glee

Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood

At the fierce news: for, be it understood,

Envoys apprised Verona that her prince Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since

A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust With Ecelin Romano, from his seat Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat And stumbling on a peril unaware, Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,

They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.

Immediate succour from the Lombard League

Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope, For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope Of the Guef cause, a glory overcast!

Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.

'Prone is the purple pavis; Este makes Mirth for the devil when he undertakes

To play the Ecelin; as if it cost Merely your pushing-by to gain a post

Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,

There be sound reasons that preferment fall

On our beloved' . . .
'Duke o' the Rood, why not?'

Shouted an Estian, 'grudge ye such a lot?

The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,

Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,

That quick with prey enough her hunger blunts,

And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts.'

'Taurello,' quoth an envoy, 'as in wane

Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain To fly but forced the earth his couch to make

Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,

Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet

That fastfriend sleeps, and hetoo sleeps: but let

Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs The aroused hurricane ere it enrougls The sea it means to cross because of him.

Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;

Creep closer on the creature! Every day Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,

Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips Telling upon his perished finger-tips

How many ancestors are to depose Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze

Deposits him in hell. So, Guelfs rebuilt Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt

When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet

Buccio Virtù—God's wafer, and the street

Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!

This could not last. Off Salinguerra went

To Padua, Podestà, "with pure intent." Said he, "my presence, judged the single bar

To permanent tranquillity, may jar No longer"—so! his back is fairly turned?

The pair of goodly palaces are burned, The gardens ravaged, and our Guelfs laugh, drunk

A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk

In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,

Old Salinguerra back again—I say, Old Salinguerra in the town once more Uprooting, overturning, flame before, Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;

Who scaped the carnage followed; then the dead

Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,

He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone.

Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived,
 would pounce
 Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and
 ounce,
 On the gorged bird. The burghers
 ground their teeth
 To see troop after troop encamp beneath
 I' the standing corn thick o'er the scanty
 patch
 It took so many patient months to
 snatch
 Out of the marsh; while just within
 their walls
 Men fed on men. At length Taurello
 calls
 A parley: "let the Count wind up the
 war!"
 Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,
 Agrees to enter for the kindest ends
 Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen
 friends,
 No horse-boy more, for fear your timid
 sort
 Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
 Quietly through the town they rode,
 jog-jog;
 "Ten, twenty, thirty,—curse the cata-
 logue
 Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange,
 Taurello shows
 Not the least sign of life!"—whereat
 arose
 A general growl: "How? With his
 victors by?
 I and my Veronese? My troops and I?
 Receive us, was your word?" So jogged
 they on,
 Nor laughed their host too openly: once
 gone
 Into the trap!—'
 Six hundred years ago!
 Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
 Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother,
 drills
 His sprawling path through letters
 anciently
 Made fine and large to suit some abbot's
 eye)
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped
 the mask,
 Flung John of Brienne's favour from
 his casque,

Forswore crusading, had no mind to
 leave
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross;
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius'
 fear,
 Was excommunicate that very year.
 'The triple-bearded Teuton come to
 life!'
 Groaned the Great League; and,
 arming for the strife,
 Wide Lombardy, on tip-toe to begin,
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
 Its cry; what cry?
 'The Emperor to come!'
 His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
 That leapt down with a crash of swords,
 spears, shields,
 One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
 Scattered anon, took station here and
 there,
 And carried it, till now, with little care—
 Cannot but cry for him; how else rebut
 Us longer? Cliffs, an earthquake
 suffered jut
 In the mid-sea, each domineering crest,
 Nothing save such another throe can
 wrest
 From out (conceive) a certain choke-
 weed grown
 Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle
 thrown
 Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
 Too sure to over-riot and confound
 Ere long each brilliant islet with itself
 Unless a second shock save shoal and
 shelf,
 Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the
 bruised
 And sullen wreck! / Sunlight to be
 diffused
 For that! Sunlight, 'neath which, a
 scum at first,
 The million fibres of our chokeweed
 nurst
 Dispread themselves, mantling the
 troubled main,
 And, shattered by those rocks, took
 hold again,
 So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to
 brood
 O'er every cluster of the multitude

Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,

An emulous exchange of pulses, vents
Of nature into nature; till some growth
Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
A surface solid now, continuous, one:
'The Pope, for us the People, who begun

The People, carries on the People thus,
To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us!

See you?

Or say, Two Principles that live
Each fitly by its Representative.

'Hill-cat'—who called him so?—the
gracefullest

Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest

Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
Those talons to their sheath!) whose
velvet purr

Soothes jealous neighbours when a
Saxon scout

—Arpo or Yoland, is it?—one without
A country or a name, presumes to
couch

Beside their noblest; until men avouch
That, of all Houses in the Trevisan,
Conrad deserves no fitter, rear or van,
Than Ecelo! They laughed as they
enrolled

That name at Milan on the page of gold,
Godego's lord,—Ramon, Marostica,
Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's
fief!

No laughter when his son, 'the Lombard Chief'

Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
Welcomed him at Roncaglia! Sadness
now—

The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
The Asolan and Euganean hills,
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness
fills

Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay
Among and care about them; day by
day

Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
A castle building to defend a cot,
A cot built for a castle to defend,
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end

To boasts how mountain ridge may join
with ridge

By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
He takes, in brief, a figure that befits
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's
dreams,

—A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise
changed

By its new neighbourhood; perchance
the vaunt

Of Otho, 'my own Este shall supplant
Your Este,' come to pass. The sire led
in

A son as cruel; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and
tall,

And curling and compliant; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve,
that neck

Of his so pinched and white, that hungry
cheek

Proved 'twas some fiend, not him, the
man's-flesh went

To feed: whereas, Romano's instru-
ment,

Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were
slipt the bole

Successively, why should not he shed
blood

To further a design? Men understood
Living was pleasant to him as he wore
His careless surcoat, glanced some
missive o'er,

Propped on his truncheon in the public
way,

While his lord lifted writhen hands to
pray,

Lost at Oliero's convent.

Hill-cats, face
With Azzo, our Guelf Lion!—nor dis-
grace

A worthiness conspicuous near and far
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,
Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)
By trumpeting the Church's princely son
Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
Ancona's March, Ferrara's . . . ask, in
fine,

Our chronicles, commenced when some
old monk

Found it intolerable to be sunk

(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
Quite out of summer while alive and well :
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
'Mid busy promptings of the brother-
hood,

Striving to coax from his decrepit brains
The reason Father Porphyry took pains
To blot those ten lines out which used
to stand

First on their charter drawn by Hilde-
brand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule
of yore

Was vested in a certain Twenty-four ;
And while within his palace these debate
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden
glare

Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care
For aught that's seen or heard until we
shut

The smother in, the lights, all noises but
The carroch's booming : safe at last !

Why strange

Such a recess should lurk behind a range
Of banquet-rooms ? Your finger—thus
—you push

A spring, and the wall opens, would you
rush

Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
Waiting, the slaughter-weapons in the
way

Strewing this very bench, with sharp-
ened ear

A preconcerted signal to appear ;
Or if you simply crouch with beating
heart,

Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
To startle them. Nor mutes nor
masquers now ;

Nor any . . . does that one man sleep
whose brow

The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises
o'er ?

What woman stood beside him ? not
the more

Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
Because that arras fell between ! Her
wise

And lulling words are yet about the
room,

Her presence wholly poured upon the
gloom

Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.
And so reclines he, saturate with her,
Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the charm : he springs up, glad
to breathe

Above the cunning element, and shakes
The stupor off as (look you) morning
breaks

On the gay dress, and, near concealed
by it,

The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid
away

Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying-
day,

In his wool wedding-robe. For he—
for he,

Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lom-
bardy,

(If I should falter now)—for he is Thine !
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine !

A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
Relentless into the consummate orb

That scared it from its right to roll along
A sempiternal path with dance and song

Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God !

Who yet resigns it not ; His darling
stoops

With no quenched lights, desponds with
no blank troops

Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent
Utterly with thee, its shy element

Like thine upburneth prosperous and
clear.

Still, what if I approach the august
sphere

Named now with only one name, disen-
twine

That under-current soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass

Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt
with glass

In John's transcendent vision,—launch
once more

That lustre ? Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutton hell disgorgeth filthiest
gloom,

Unbitten by its whirling sulphur-
spume—

Or whence the grieved and obscure
waters slope

Into a darkness quieted by hope ;

Plucker of amaranths grown beneath
 God's eye
 In gracious twilights where His chosen
 lie,
 I would do this ! if I should falter now !
 In Mantua-territory half is slough,
 Half pine-tree forest ; maples, scarlet-
 oaks
 Breed o'er the river-beds ; even Mincio
 chokes
 With sand the summer through ; but
 'tis morass
 In winter up to Mantua walls. There
 was,
 Some thirty years before this evening's
 coil,
 One spot reclaimed from the surrounding
 spoil,
 Goito ; just a castle built amid
 A few low mountains ; firs and larches
 hid
 Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard
 bound
 The rest. Some captured creature in
 a pound,
 Whose artless wonder quite precludes
 distress,
 Secure beside in its own loveliness,
 So peered with airy head, below, above.
 The castle at its toils, the lapwings
 love
 To glean among at grape-time. Pass
 within.
 A maze of corridors contrived for sin,
 Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got
 past,
 You gain the inmost chambers, gain at
 last
 A maple-panelled room : that haze
 which seems
 Floating about the panel, if there gleams
 A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold
 And in light-graven characters unfold
 The Arab's wisdom everywhere ; what
 shade
 Marred them a moment, those slim
 pillars made,
 Cut like a company of palms to prop
 The roof, each kissing top entwined
 with top,
 Leaning together ; in the carver's mind
 Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek
 combined

With straining forehead, shoulders
 purpled, hair
 Diffused between, who in a goat-skin
 bear
 A vintage ; graceful sister-palms ! But
 quick
 To the main wonder, now. A vault,
 see ; thick
 Black shade about the ceiling, though
 fine slits
 Across the buttress suffer light by fits
 Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay,
 stoop—
 A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font,
 a group
 Round it, each side of it, where'er one
 sees,
 Upholds it—shrinking Caryatides
 Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilled
 flesh
 Beneath her Maker's finger when the
 fresh
 First pulse of life shot brightening the
 snow.
 The font's edge burthens every shoulder,
 so
 They muse upon the ground, eyelids
 half closed ;
 Some, with meek arms behind their
 backs disposed,
 Some, crossed above their bosoms, some,
 to veil
 Their eyes, some, propping chin and
 cheek so pale,
 Some, hanging slack an utter helpless
 length
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole
 strength
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to
 see,
 Like priestesses because of sin impure
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
 Having that once drunk sweetness to
 the dregs.
 And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
 Pardon for them : constant as eve he
 came
 To sit beside each in her turn, the
 same
 As one of them, a certain space : and
 awe
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw

Sunset slant cheerful through the
buttress-chinks,
Gold seven times globed; surely our
maiden shrinks

And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
Her load were lightened, one shade less
the stain

Obscured her forehead, yet one more
bead slipt

From off the rosary whereby the crypt
Keeps count of the contritions of its
charge?

Then with a step more light, a heart
more large,

He may depart, leave her and every one
To linger out the penance in mute stone.

Ah, but Sordello? 'Tis the tale I mean
To tell you. In this castle may be seen,
On the hill tops, or underneath the vines,
Or eastward by the mound of firs and
pines

That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
Sordello: do but look on him awhile—
Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest
smile

The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
Among the yellowing vineyards; see
him lurk

('Tis winter with its sullenest of storms)
Beside that arras-length of broidered
forms,

On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter
bright

—Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,
Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,
Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face
—Look, now he turns away! Your-
selves shall trace

(The delicate nostril swerving wide and
fine,

A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
Delight at every sense; you can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she
frames

Some happy lands, that have luxurious
names,

For loose fertility; a footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air
Half-germinating spices; mere decay
Produces richer life; and day by day
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the
rose.

You recognize at once the finer dress
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
At eye and ear, while round the rest is
furled

(As though she would not trust them
with her world)

A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
And lets but half the sun look fervid
through.

How can such love?—like souls on each
full-fraught

Discovery brooding, blind at first to
aught

Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love
Becomes an aching weight; and, to
remove

A curse that haunts such natures—to
preclude

Their finding out themselves can work
no good

To what they love nor make it very blest
By their endeavour,—they are fain to invest
The lifeless thing with life from their
own soul,

Availing it to purpose, to control,
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
And separate interests that may employ
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.

Nor rest they here; fresh births of
beauty wake

Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
With every mode of loveliness: then
cast

Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
Before a coming glory. Up and down
Runs arrowy-fire, while earthly forms
combine

To throb the secret forth; a touch
divine—

And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic
rod:

Visibly through His garden walketh God.
So fare they. Now revert. One
character

Denotes them through the progress and
the stir,—

A need to blend with each external
charm,
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide
and warm,
In something not themselves; they
would belong
To what they worship—stronger and
more strong
Thus prodigally fed—which gathers
shape
And feature, soon imprisons past escape
The votary framed to love and to submit
Nor ask, as passionately he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So
runs
A legend; light had birth ere moons and
suns,
Flowing through space a river and
alone,
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres
were strown
Hither and thither, foundering and
blind,
When into each of them rushed light—
to find
Itself no place, foiled of its radiant
chance.
Let such forego their just inheritance!
For there's a class that eagerly looks,
too,
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revelation born a
twin
With a distinctest consciousness within
Referring still the quality, now first
Revealed, to their own soul—its instinct
nursed
In silence, now remembered better,
shown
More thoroughly, but not the less their
own;
A dream come true; the special exercise
Of any special function that implies
The being fair, or good, or wise, or
strong,
Dormant within their nature all along—
Whose fault? So, homage, other souls
direct
Without, turns inward; 'How should
this deject
Thee, soul?' they murmur; 'where-
fore strength be quelled
Because, its trivial accidents withheld,

Organs are missed that clog the world,
inert,
Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,
Like thine—existence cannot satiate,
Cannot surprise? laugh thou at envious
fate,
Who, from earth's simplest combination
stamp
With individuality—uncrampt
By living its faint elemental life,
Dost soar to heaven's complexest
essence, rife
With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,
Equal to being all!'
In truth? 'Thou hast
Life, then—wilt challenge life for us:
our race
Is vindicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,
With our more bounded wills?
Ah, but to find
A certain mood enervate such a mind,
Counsel it slumber in the solitude
Thus reached nor, stooping, task for
mankind's good
Its nature just as life and time accord
—'Too narrow an arena to reward
Emprize—the world's occasion worth-
less since
Not absolutely fitted to evince
Its mastery!' Or if yet worse befall,
And a desire possess it to put all
That nature forth, forcing our straitened
sphere
Contain it,—to display completely here
The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern,—
So that Sordello . . . Fool, who spied the
mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
Already as he loiters? Born just now,
With the new century, beside the glow
And efflorescence out of barbarism;
Witness a Greek or two from the abyss
That stray through Florence-town with
studious air,
Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!
While at Siena is Guidone set,
Forehead on hand; a painful birth
must be
Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy

Or transept gather fruits of one great
gaze

At the moon: look you! The same
orange haze,—

The same blue stripe round that—and,
i' the midst,

Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid,
who didst

Pursue the dizzy painter!

Woe, then, worth

Any officious babble letting forth

The leprosy confirmed and ruinous

To spirit lodged in a contracted house!

Go back to the beginning, rather; blend

It gently with Sordello's life; the end

Is piteous, you may see, but much
between

Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx
to screen

The full-grown pest, some lid to shut
upon

The goblin! So they found at Babylon,
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage

(Antonine)

Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,

In rummaging among the rarities,

A certain coffer; he who made the prize

Opened it greedily; and out there curled

Just such another plague, for half the
world

Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and
couch asquat,

Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in
spot

Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid

Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid

Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of
gold.

Who may hear Sordello's story
told,

And how he never could remember
when

He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's

Glided his youth away; beyond the
glades

On the fir-forest's border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for
him

No other world: but this appeared his
own

To wander through at pleasure and
alone.

The castle too seemed empty; far and
wide

Might he disport; only the northern
side

Lay under a mysterious interdict—

Slight, just enough remembered to
restrict

His roaming to the corridors, the vault
Where those font-bearers expiate their

fault,

The maple-chamber, and the little nooks

And nests, and breezy parapet that
looks

Over the woods to Mantua: there he
strolled.

Some foreign women-servants, very old,
Tended and crept about him—all his

clue

To the world's business and embroiled
ado

Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.

And first a simple sense of life en-
grossed

Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;

The day's adventures for the day suffice!
Its constant tribute of perceptions

strange,

With sleep and stir in healthy inter-
change,

Suffice, and leave him for the next at
ease

Like the great palmer-worm that strips
the trees,

Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
And, when September finds them sere

or scant,

Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters
quite,

And hies him after unforeseen delight.

So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed;

As ever, round each new discovery,
wreathed

Luxuriantly the fancies infantine

His admiration, bent on making fine

Its novel friend at any risk, would fling

In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king,

Confessed those minions! Eager to
dispense

So much from his own stock of thought
and sense

As might enable each to stand alone

And serve him for a fellow; with his
own,

Joining the qualities that just before
 Had graced some older favourite. Thus
 they wore
 A fluctuating halo, yesterday
 Set flicker and to-morrow filched
 away,—
 Those upland objects each of separate
 name,
 Each with an aspect never twice the
 same,
 Waxing and waning as the new-born
 host
 Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-
 frost,
 Gave to familiar things a face grotesque;
 Only, preserving through the mad bur-
 lesque
 A grave regard. Conceive! the orpine-
 patch
 Blossoming earliest on the log-house-
 thatch
 The day those archers wound along the
 vines—
 Related to the Chief that left their lines
 To climb with clinking step the northern
 stair
 Up to the solitary chambers where
 Sordello never came. Thus thrall
 reached thrall;
 He o'er-festooning every interval,
 As the adventurous spider, making light
 Of distance, shoots her threads from
 depth to height,
 From barbican to battlement; so flung
 Fantasies forth and in their centre
 swung
 Our architect,—the breezy morning
 fresh
 Above, and merry,—all his waving mesh
 Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-
 edged.
 This world of ours by tacit pact is
 pledged
 To laying such a spangled fabric low
 Whether by gradual brush or gallant
 blow.
 But its abundant will was baulked here:
 doubt
 Rose tardily in one so fenced about
 From most that nurtures judgment,
 care and pain:
 Judgment, that dull expedient we are
 fain,

Lessfavoured, to adopt betimes and force
 Stead us, diverted from our natural
 course
 Of joys,—contrive some yet amid the
 dearth,
 Vary and render them, it may be, worth
 Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
 Selfish enough, without a moral sense
 However feeble; what informed the boy
 Others desired a portion in his joy?
 Or say a ruthless chance broke woof and
 warp—
 A heron's nest beat down by March
 winds sharp,
 A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
 A bird with unsoiled breast and filmless
 eyes
 Warm in the brake—could these undo
 the trance
 Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance
 That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat
 fern-seed
 And peer beside us and report indeed
 If (your word) 'genius' dawned with
 throes and stings
 And the whole fiery catalogue, while
 springs
 Summers and winters quietly came and
 went.
 Time put at length that period to
 content,
 Byright the world should have imposed:
 bereft
 Of its good offices, Sordello, left
 To study his companions, managed rip
 Their fringe off, learn the true relation-
 ship,
 Core with its crust, their natures with his
 own:
 Amid his wild-wood sights helived alone.
 As if the poppy felt with him! Though
 he
 Partook the poppy's red effrontery
 Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite
 with rain,
 And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling
 crane
 Lay bare. That's gone! yet why
 renounce, for that,
 His disenchanting tributaries—flat
 Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn,
 Their simple presence might not well be
 borne

Whose parley was a transport once :
recall

The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after
all,

A poppy : why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?
The new-born judgment answered :
'little boots

Beholding other creatures' attributes
And having none !' or, say that it
sufficed,

'Yet, could one but possess, oneself,'
(enticed

Judgment) 'some special office !'
Nought beside

Serves you ? 'Well then, be somehow
justified

For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
And concentrate, rather than swell, the
tribe

Of actual pleasures : what, now, from
without

Effects it ?—proves, despite a lurking
doubt,

Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble
spared ?

That tasting joys by proxy thus, you
fared

The better for them ?' Thus much
craved his soul.

Alas, from the beginning love is whole
And true ; if sure of nought beside,
most sure

Of its own truth at least ; nor may
endure

A crowd to see its face, that cannot
know

How hot the pulses throb its heart
below.

While its own helplessness and utter
want

Of means to worthily be ministrant
To what it worships, do but fan the
more

Its flame, exalt the idol far before
Itself as it would have it ever be.

Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
Coerced and put to shame, retaining
will,

Care little, take mysterious comfort still,
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain

If others judge their claims not urged in
vain,

And say for them their stifled thoughts
aloud.

So, they must ever live before a crowd :
—'Vanity,' Naddo tells you.

Whence contrive
A crowd, now? From these women just
alive,

That archer-troop ? Forth glided—not
alone

Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his
soul

Shook as he stumbled through the
arras'd glooms

On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and
weird perfumes,

Started the meagre Tuscan up,—her
eyes,

The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
—But the entire out-world : whatever,
scraps

And snatches, song and story, dreams
perhaps,

Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,

Nor counted a befitting heritage
Each, of its own right, singly to engage

Some man, no other,—such now dared
to stand

Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on
every hand

Soon disengaged themselves, and he
discerned

A sort of human life : at least, was
turned

A stream of lifelike figures through his
brain.

Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,
Ere he could choose, surrounded him ;
a stuff

To work his pleasure on ; there, sure
enough :

But as for gazing, what shall fix that
gaze ?

Are they to simply testify the ways
He who convoked them sends his soul
along

With the cloud's thunder or a dove's
brood-song ?

—While they live each his life, boast
each his own

Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone

In some one point where something
 dearest loved
 Is easiest gained—far worthier to be
 proved
 'Than aught he envies in the forest-
 wights !
 No simple and self-evident delights,
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,
 Contrasts or combinations, new and
 strange,
 Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognized
 By this, the sudden company—loves
 prized
 By those who are to prize his own
 amount
 Of loves. Once care because such make
 account,
 Allow a foreign recognition stamp
 The current value, and his crowd shall
 vamp
 Him counterfeits enough ; and so their
 print
 Be on the picce, 'tis gold, attests the
 mint,
 And 'good,' pronounce they whom his
 new appeal
 Is made to : if their casual print con-
 ceal—
 This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
 What he have lived without, nor felt
 the loss—
 Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
 —What matter ? so must speech ex-
 pand the dumb
 Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sor-
 dello, late
 No foolish woodland-sights could satiate,
 Betakes himself to study hungrily
 Just what the puppets his crude fantasy
 Supposes notablist, popes, kings, priests,
 knights,
 May please to promulgate for appetites ;
 Accepting all their artificial joys
 Not as he views them, but as he employs
 Each shape to estimate the other's stock
 Of attributes, that on a marshalled flock
 Of authorized enjoyments he may spend
 Himself, be men, now, as he used to
 blend
 With tree and flower—nay more en-
 tirely, else
 'Twere mockery : for instance, 'how
 excels

My life that chieftain's ? ' (who apprised
 the youth
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in
 truth,
 Imperial Vicar ?) ' Turns he in his tent
 Remissly ? Re it so—my head is bent
 Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.
 What if he stalks the Trentine-pass ?
 Yon steep
 I climbed an hour ago with little toil—
 We are alike there. But can I, too, foil
 The Gueifs' paid stabber, carelessly
 afford
 Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o'
 the sword
 Baffling their project in a moment ? '
 Here
 No rescue ! Poppy he is none, but peer
 To Ecelin, assuredly : his hand,
 Fashioned no otherwise, should wield
 a brand
 With Ecelin's success—try, now ! He
 soon
 Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
 From earth ; left each abortive boy's-
 attempt
 For feats, from failure happily exempt,
 In fancy at his beck. ' One day I will
 Accomplish it ! Are they not older still
 —Not grown up men and women ? 'Tis
 beside
 Only a dream ; and though I must
 abide
 With dreams now, I may find a thorough
 vent
 For all myself, acquire an instrument
 For acting what these people act ; my
 soul
 Hunting a body out, may gain its whole
 Desire some day ! ' How else express
 chagrin
 And resignation, show the hope steal in
 With which he let sink from an aching
 wrist
 The rough-hewn ash bow ? straight,
 a gold shaft hissed
 Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
 Superbly ! ' Crosses to the breach !
 God's Town
 Is gained Him back ! ' Why bend rough
 ash-bows more ?
 Thus lives he : if not careless as
 before,

Comforted : for one may anticipate,
Rehearse the Futurc, be prepared when
fate

Shall have prepared in turn real men
whose names

Startle, real places of enormous fames,
Este abroad and Ecelin at home

To worship him,—Mantua, Verona,
Rome

To witness it. Who grudges time so
spent ?

Rather test qualities to heart's content—
Summon them, thrice selected, near and
far—

Compress the starriest into one star,
And grasp the whole at once !

The pageant thinned
Accordingly ; from rank to rank, like
wind

His spirit passed to winnow and divide ;
Back fell the simpler phantasms ;
every side

The strong clave to the wise ; with
either classed

The beauteous ; so, till two or three
amassed

Mankind's besecmingnesses, and re-
duced

Themselves eventually, graces loosed,
And lavished strengths, to heighten up
One Shape

Whose potency no creature should
escape.

Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk ?
Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the
stalk,

Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine
The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramolinc—
Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed
and chapped,

Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-
capped,

Are dates plucked from the bough John
Brienne sent,

To keep in mind his sluggish armament
Of Canaan.—Friedrich's, all the pomp
and fierce

Demeanour ! But harsh sounds and
sights transpierce

So rarely the serene cloud where he
dwells,

Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest
words are spells

On the obdurate ! That right arm
indeed

Has thunder for its slave ; but where 's
the need

Of thunder if the stricken multitude
Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,
While songs go up exulting, then dis-
spread,

Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels ? 'Tis the tune,
Nor much unlike the words the women
croon

Smilingly, colourless and faint-designed
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some
remind

Of her extreme youth's love-tales.
'Eglamor

Made that !' Half minstrel and half
emperor,

What but ill objects vexed him ? Such
he slew.

The kinder sort were easy to subdue
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet
tones ;

And these a gracious hand advanced to
thrones

Beneath him. Wherefore twist and
torture this,

Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
I instead of saying, neither less nor more,
He had discovered, as our world before,
Apollo ? That shall be the name ; nor
bid

Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
The youth—what thefts of every clime
and day

Contributed to purfle the array
He climbed with (June at deep) some
close ravine

'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the runnel
slit

Elate with rains : into whose streamlet
dipt

He foot, yet trod, you thought, with
unwet sock—

Though really on the stubs of living rock
Ages ago it crenneled ; vines for roof,
Lindens for wall ; before him, aye aloof,
Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-
fly,

Born of the simmering quiet, there to
die.

Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
Mighty descents of forest ; multiplied
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,
There gendered the grave maple-stocks
at ease.

And, proud of its observer, strait the
wood

Tried old surprises on him ; black it
stood

A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed
o'er)

So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no
more

Must pass ; yet presently (the cloud
dispatched)

Each clump, behold, was glistening
detached

A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-
stems !

Yet could not he denounce the strata-
gems

He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft
would hang

White summer-lightnings ; as it sank
and sprang

To measure, that whole palpitating
breast

Of heaven, 'twas Apollo, nature prest
At eve to worship.

Time stole : by degrees
The Pythons perish off ; his votaries

Sink to respectful distance ; songs
redeem

Their pains, but briefer ; their dismissals
seem

Emphatic ; only girls are very slow
To disappear—his Delians ! Some that
glow

O' the instant, more with earlier loves
to wrench

Away, reserves to quell, disdains to
quench ;

Alike in one material circumstance—
All soon or late adore Apollo ! Glance

The bevy through, divine Apollo's
choice,

His Daphne ! 'We secure Count
Richard's voice

In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
As our Taurello, say his faded friends,

'By granting him our Palma !'—The
sole child,

They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled

Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
Wedded and turned him wicked : 'but
the maid

Rejects his suit,' those sleepy women
boast.

She, scorning all beside, deserves the
most

Sordello : so, conspicuous in his world
Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses

curled
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and

wound
About her like a glory ! even the

ground
Was bright as with spilt sunbeams ;
breathe not, breathe

Not !—poised, see, one leg doubled
underneath,

Its small foot buried in the dimpling
snow,

Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for

cool air,
The vein-streaks swoln a richer violet

where
The languid blood lies heavily ; yet

calm
On her slight prop, each flat and out-
spread palm,

As but suspended in the act to rise
By consciousness of beauty, whence her

eyes
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she
meets

Apollo's gaze in the pine-glooms.
Time fleets :

That's worst ! Because the pre-ap-
pointed age

Approaches. Fate is tardy with the
stage

And crowd she promised. Lean he
grows and pale,

Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet

alone
He tarries here ! The earnest smile is
gone.

How long this might continue, matters
not ;

—For ever, possibly ; since to the spot
None come : our lingering Taurello

quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits

Back to her place disburthened of a care.
Strange—to be constant here if he is
there !

Is it distrust ? Oh, never ! for they both
Goad Ecelin alike—Romano's growth
So daily manifest, that Azzo's dumb
And Richard wavers : let but Friedrich
come !

—Find matter for the minstrelsy's
report,
Lured from the Isle and its young
Kaiser's court

To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,
Northward to Provence that, and thus
far south

The other. What a method to apprise
Neighbours of births, espousals, obse-
quies !

Which in their very tongue the Trouba-
dour

Records ; and his performance makes
a tour,

For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,
Until the Formidable House is famed
Over the country—as Taurello aimed,
Who introduced, although the rest
adopt,

The novelty. Such games, her absence
stopped,

Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua : whence an
accident

Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed
content,

Opened, like any flash that cures the
blind,

The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND

THE woods were long austere with
snow : at last

Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and
fast

Larches, scattered through pine-tree
solitudes,

Brightened, 'as in the slumbrous heart
o' the woods

Our buried year, a witch, grew young
again

To placid incantations, and that stain
About were from her cauldron, green
smoke blent

With those black pines '—so Eglamor
gave vent

To a chance fancy. Whence a just
rebuke

From his companion ; brother Naddo
shook

The solemnest of brows ; ' Beware,' he
said,

' Of setting up conceits in nature's
stead !'

Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought
so sure

As that to-day's adventure will secure
Palma, the visioned lady—only pass

O'er yon damp mound and its ex-
hausted grass,

Under that brake where sundawn feeds
the stalks

Of withered fern with gold, into those
walks

Of pine, and take her ! Buoyantly he
went.

Again his stooping forehead was be-
sprent

With dew-drops from the skirting ferns.
Then wide

Opened the great morass, shot every side
With flashing water through and

through ; a-shine,
Thick-steaming, all alive. Whose shape

divine
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour,
glanced

Athwart the flying herons ? He ad-
vanced,

But warily ; though Mincio leaped no
more,

Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-
floor

A diamond jet : and if he stopped to pick
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,

And circling blood-worms, minnow,
newt or loach,

A sudden pond would silently encroach
This way and that. On Palma passed.

The verge
Of a new wood was gained. She will
emerge

Flushed, now, and panting,—crowds to see,—will own
 She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,
 To leave his suit ! One screen of pine-trees still
 Opposes : but—the startlingspectacle—
 Mantua, this time ! Under the walls—a crowd
 Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud
 Round a pavilion. How he stood !
 In truth
 No prophecy had come to pass : his youth
 In its prime now—and where was homage poured
 Upon Sordello ?—born to be adored,
 And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made
 To cope with any, cast into the shade
 By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick
 And tingle in his blood ; a sleight—a trick—
 And much would be explained. It went for nought—
 The best of their endowments were ill bought
 With his identity : nay, the conceit,
 That this day's roving led to Palma's feet
 Was not so vain—list ! The word, 'Palma !' Steal
 Aside, and die, Sordello ; this is real,
 And this—abjure !
 What next ? The curtains, see,
 Dividing ! She is there ; and presently
 He will be there—the proper You, at length—
 In your own cherished dress of grace and strength :
 Most like, the very Boniface !
 Not so.
 It was a showy man advanced ; but though
 A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound
 Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,
 —' This is not he,' Sordello felt ; while,
 'Place
 For the best Troubadour of Boniface !'

Hollaed the Jongleurs,—'Eglamor, whose lay
 Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day !
 Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute
 With the new lute-string, 'Elys,' named to suit
 The song : he stealthily at watch, the while,
 Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
 Of pride : then up he struck. Sordello's brain
 Swam ; for he knew a sometime deed again ;
 So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm
 The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
 Mistaking its true version—was the tale
 Not of Apollo ? Only, what avail
 Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,
 If the man dared no further ? Has he ceased ?
 And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,
 Sordello was beside him, had begun
 (Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend
 The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,
 Taking the other's names and time and place
 For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
 After the flying story ; word made leap
 Out word, rhyme—rhyme ; the lay could barely keep
 Pace with the action visibly rushing past :
 Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast
 Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull
 That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full
 His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath his tongue,
 And found 'twas Apis' flank his hasty prong
 Insulted. But the people—but the cries,
 The crowding round, and proffering the prize !

(For he had gained some prize)—He
 seemed to shrink
 Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
 One sight withheld him. There sat
 Adelaide,
 Silent ; but at her knees the very maid
 Of the North Chamber, her red lips as
 rich,
 The same pure fleecy hair ; one weft of
 which,
 Golden and great, quite touched his
 cheek as o'er
 She leant, speaking some six words and
 no more.
 He answered something, anything ; and
 she
 Unbound a scarf and laid it heavily
 Upon him, her neck's warmth and all.
 Again
 Moved the arrested magic ; in his brain
 Noises grew, and a light that turned to
 glare,
 And greater glare, until the intense flare
 Engulfed him, shut the whole scene
 from his sense.
 And when he woke 'twas many a furlong
 thence,
 At home ; the sun shining his ruddy
 wont ;
 The customary birds'-chirp ; but his
 front
 Was crowned—was crowned ! Her
 scented scarf around
 His neck ! Whose gorgeous vesture
 heaps the ground ?
 A prize ? He turned, and peeringly on
 him
 Brooded the women-faces, kind and
 dim,
 Ready to talk.—'The Jongleurs in a
 troop
 Had brought him back, Naddo and
 Squarcialupe
 And Tagliafer ; how strange ! a child-
 hood spent
 In taking, well for him, so brave a bent !
 Since Eglamor,' they heard, 'was dead
 with spite,
 And Palma chose him for her minstrel.'
 Light
 Sordello rose—to think, now ; hitherto
 He had perceived. Sure, a discovery
 grew

Out of it all ! 'Best live from first to last
 The transport o'er again. A week he
 passed,
 Sucking the sweet out of each circum-
 stance,
 From the bard's outbreak to the luscious
 trance
 Bounding his own achievement. Strange !
 A man
 Recounted an adventure, but began
 Imperfectly ; his own task was to fill
 The frame-work up, sing well what he
 sang ill,
 Supply the necessary points, set loose
 As many incidents of little use
 —More imbecile the other, not to see
 Their relative importance clear as he !
 But, for a special pleasure in the act
 Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,
 From Elys, to sing Elys ?—from each fit
 Of rapture, to contrive a song of it ?
 True, this snatch or the other seemed to
 wind
 Into a treasure, helped himself to find
 A beauty in himself ; for, see, he soared
 By means of that mere snatch to many
 a hoard
 Of fancies ; as some falling cone bears
 soft
 The eye, along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
 To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the
 cause
 Such a performance might exact ap-
 plause
 From men, if they had fancies too ?
 Could fate
 Decree they found a beauty separate
 In the poor snatch itself ?—'Take Elys,
 there,
 —Her head that's sharp and perfect
 like a pear,
 So close and smooth are laid the few
 fine locks
 Coloured like honey oozed from top-
 most rocks
 Sun-blanced the livelong summer'—if
 they heard
 Just those two rhymes, assented at my
 word,
 And loved them as I love them who have
 run
 These fingers through those pale locks,
 let the sun

Into the white cool skin—who first could clutch,
 Then praise—I needs must be a God to such.
 Or if some few, above themselves, and yet
 Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
 An impress on our gift? So, men believe
 And worship what they know not, nor receive
 Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, perchance,
 Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance
 Until, by song, each floating part be linked
 To each, and all grow palpable, distinct?
 He pondered this.
 Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
 Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps, near
 And nearer, and the underwood was pushed
 Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed
 At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;
 Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
 Came o'er the sky although 'twas mid-day yet:
 You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
 Flutter—'a Roman bride, when they'd dispart
 Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,
 Holding that famous rape in memory still,
 Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,
 And looked thus, Eglamor would say—indeed
 'Tis Eglamor, no other, these precede
 Home hither in the woods. "Twere surely sweet
 Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
 To sleep!' judged Naddo, who in person led
 Jongleurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,

A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
 Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
 Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends
 Nigh weary; still the death proposed amends.
 'Let us but get them safely through my song
 And home again!' quoth Naddo.
 All along,
 This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
 —This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,
 Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.
 For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,
 And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,
 A ceremony that withdrew the last
 Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil
 Which hid the holy place—should one so frail
 Stand there without such effort? or repine
 That much was blank, uncertain at the shrine
 He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,
 The Power responded, and some sound or sight
 Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed
 In rhyme, the beautiful, forever! mixed
 With his own life, unloosed when he should please,
 Having it safe at hand, ready to ease
 All pain, remove all trouble; every time
 He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,
 Like Perseus when he loosed his naked love,
 Faltering; so distinct and far above
 Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,
 Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
 At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
 In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,

His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these
 few
 And their arrangement finds enough to
 do
 For his best art. Then, how he loved
 that art !
 The calling marking him a man apart
 From men—one not to care, take
 counsel for
 Cold hearts, comfortless faces—(Eg-
 lamor
 Was neediest of his tribe)—since verse,
 the gift,
 Was his, and men, the whole of them,
 must shift
 Without it, e'en content themselves
 with wealth
 And pomp and power, snatching a life
 by stealth.
 So, Eglamor was not without his pride !
 The sorriest bat which cowers through
 noontide
 While other birds are jocund, has one
 time
 When moon and stars are blinded, and
 the prime
 Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer ;
 And Eglamor was noblest poet here
 He knew that, 'mid the April woods, he
 cast
 Conceits upon in plenty as he past,
 That Naddo might suppose him not to
 think
 Entirely on the coming triumph : wink
 At the one weakness ! 'Twas a fervid
 child,
 That song of his—no brother of the guild
 Had e'er conceived its like. The rest
 you know,
 The exaltation and the overthrow :
 Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
 His life—to that it came. Yet envy
 sank
 Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
 And, for the first time, shouted—tried
 to shout
 Like others, not from any zeal to show
 Pleasure that way : the common sort
 did so,
 And what was Eglamor ? who, bending
 down
 The same, placed his beneath Sordello's
 crown,

Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,
 Left one great tear on it, then joined his
 band
 —In time ; for some were watching at
 the door :
 Who knows what envy may effect ?
 ' Give o'er,
 Nor charm his lips, nor craze him !'
 (here one spied
 And disengaged the withered crown)—
 ' Beside
 His crown ! How prompt and clear
 those verses rung
 To answer yours ! nay, sing them !'
 And he sung
 Them calmly. Home he went ; friends
 used to wait
 His coming, zealous to congratulate,
 But, to a man, so quickly runs report,
 Could do no less than leave him, and
 escort
 His rival. That eve, then, bred many
 a thought :
 What must his future life be ? was he
 brought
 So low, who was so lofty this Spring
 morn ?
 At length he said, ' Best sleep now with
 my scorn,
 And by to-morrow I devise some plain
 Expedient !' So, he slept, nor woke
 again.
 They found as much, those friends,
 when they returned
 O'erflowing with the marvels they had
 learned
 About Sordello's paradise, his roves
 Among the hills and valleys, plains and
 groves,
 Wherein, no doubt, this lay was
 roughly cast,
 Polished by slow degrees, completed last
 To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.
 Such form the chanter's now, and, out
 of breath,
 They lay the beaten man in his abode,
 Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
 Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore
 By means of it, however, one step more
 In joy ; and, mastering the round at
 length,
 Learnt how to live in weakness as in
 strength,

When from his covert forth he stood,
addressed

Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,
Primaeval pines o'er canopy his couch,
And, most of all, his fame—(shall I
avouch

Eglamor heard it, dead though he might
look,

And laughed as from his brow Sordello
took

The crown, and laid it on his breast, and
said

It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)
—Continue. Nor the prayer quite
fruitless fell.

A plant they have yielding a three-
leaved bell

Which whiten at the heart ere noon,
and ails

Till evening; evening gives it to her
gales

To clear away with such forgotten things
As are an eyesore to the morn: this
brings

Him to their mind, and bears his very
name.

So much for Eglamor. My own
month came;

'Twas a sunrise of blossoming and May.
Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay
Sordello; each new sprinkle of white
stars

That smell fainter of wine than Massic
jars

Dug up at Baiae, when the south wind
shed

The ripest, made him happier; filleted
And robbed the same, only a lute beside
Lay on the turf. Before him far and
wide

The country stretched: Goito slept
behind

—The castle and its covert, which con-
fined

Him with his hopes and fears; so fain
of old

To leave the story of his birth untold.
At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow

Of his Apollo-life, a certain low
And wretched whisper, winding through
the bliss,

Admonished, no such fortune could be
his,

All was quite false and sure to fade one
day:

The closer drew he round him his
array

Of brilliance to expel the truth. But
when

A reason for his difference from men
Surprised him at the grave, he took no

rest
While aught of that old life, superbly
drest

Down to its meanest incident, remained
A mystery—alas, they soon explained

Away Apollo! and the tale amounts
To this: when at Vicenza both her

Counts
Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,

Reviled him as he followed; he for spite
Must fire their quarter, though that self-

same night
Among the flames young Ecelin was

born
Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn
From the roused populace hard on the

rear,
By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear
(Grew high; into the thick Elcorte leapt,

Saved her, and died; no creature left
except

His child to thank. And when the full
escape

Was known—how men impaled from
chine to nape

Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned
Bishop Pistor's concubines, and burned

Taurello's entire household, flesh and
fell,

Missing the sweeter prey—such courage
well

Might claim reward. The orphan, ever
since,

Sordello, had been nurtured by his
prince

Within a blind retreat where Adelaide—
(For, once this notable discovery made,

The Past at every point was understood)
—Might harbour easily when times were

rude,
When Azzo schemed for Palma, to re-
trieve

That pledge of Agnes Este—loath to
leave

Mantua unguarded with a vigilant
 eye,
 Taurello biding there ambiguously—
 He who could have no motive now to
 moil
 For his own fortunes since their utter
 spoil—
 As it were worth while yet (went the
 report)
 To disengage himself from her. In
 short,
 Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just
 named
 His lady's minstrel, was to be pro-
 claimed
 —How shall I phrase it? —Monarch of
 the World!
 For, on the morning that array was
 furled
 For ever, and in place of one a slave
 To longings, wild indeed, but longings
 save
 In dreams as wild, suppressed—one
 daring not
 Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
 Until a magical equipment, strength
 Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he
 chose at length,
 Content with unproved wits and failing
 frame,
 In virtue of his simple will, to claim
 That mastery, no less—to do his best
 With means so limited, and let the
 rest
 Go by,—the seal was set: never again
 Sordello could in his own sight remain
 One of the many, one with hopes and
 cares
 And interests nowisedistinctfrom theirs,
 Only peculiar in a thriveless store
 Of fancies, which were fancies and no
 more;
 Never again for him and for the crowd
 A common law was challenged and
 allowed
 If calmly reasoned of, how'er denied
 By a mad impulse nothing justified
 Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
 Is clear: why needs Sordello square his
 course
 By any known example? Men no more
 Compete with him than tree and flower
 before;

Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
 Than such as act, each stooping to his
 star,
 Acquiring thence his function; he has
 gained
 The same result with meaner mortals
 trained
 To strength or beauty, moulded to ex-
 press
 Each the idea that rules him; since no
 less
 He comprehends that function, but can
 still
 Embrace the others, take of might his fill
 With Richard as of grace with Palma,
 mix
 Their qualities, or for a moment fix
 On one; abiding free meantime, un-
 cramped
 By any partial organ, never stamped
 Strong, and to strength turning all
 energies—
 Wise, and restricted to becoming wise—
 That is, he loves not, nor possesses One
 Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
 To its exclusive purpose. 'Fortunate!
 This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
 A soul so various—took no casual mould
 Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,
 Lay clogged forever thence, averse to
 change
 As that: whereas it left her free to range,
 Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
 Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
 So, range, my soul!—who, by self-con-
 sciousness,
 The last drop of all beauty dost ex-
 press—
 The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
 For thee: but for the world, that can
 dispense
 Wonder on men who, themselves, won-
 der—make
 A shift to love at second-hand, and take
 Those for its idols who but idolize,
 Themselves,—world that loves souls as
 strong or wise,
 Who, themselves, love strength, wisdom,
 —it shall bow
 Surely in unexampled worship now,
 Discerning me!—
 (Dear monarch, I beseech,
 Notice how lamentably wide a breach

Is here ! discovering this, discover too
What our poor world has possibly to do
With it ! As pigmy natures as you
please—

So much the better for you ; take your
ease ;

Look on, and laugh ; style yourself God
alone ;

Strangle some day with a cross olive-
stone :

All that is right enough : but why want
us

To know that you yourself know thus
and thus ?)

' The world shall bow to me conceiving
all

Man's life, who see its blisses, great and
small,

Afar—not tasting any ; no machine
To exercise my utmost will is mine :

Be mine mere consciousness ! Let them
perceive

What I could do, a mastery believe,
Asserted and established to the throng

By their selected evidence of song
Which now shall prove, whate'er they

are, or seek
To be, I am—who take no pains to
speak,

Change no old standards of perfection,
vex

With no strange forms created to per-
plex,

But will perform their bidding and no
more,

At their own satiating-point give o'er,
While each shall love in me the love that

leads
His soul to its perfection.' Song, not
deeds,

(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate
would brook

Mankind no other organ ; he would look
For not another channel to dispense

His own volition, and receive their
sense

Of its existing ; but would be content,
Obstructed else, with merely verse for

vent.
Nor should, for instance, strength an
outlet seek

And, striving, be admired, nor grace
bespeak

Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes ;
Nor wisdom, poured forth, change un-
seemly moods :

But he would give and take on song's one
point.

Like some huge throbbing-stone that,
poised a-joint,

Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,
Must sue in just one accent ; tempests

shed
Thunder, and raves the landstorm : only
let

That key by any little noise be set—
The far benighted hunter's halloo

pitch
On that, the hungry curlew chance to
scritch

Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the
rift,

However loud, however low—all lift
The groaning monster, stricken to the

heart.
Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its
part,

And this, for his, will hardly interfere !
Its businesses in blood and blaze this

year
But wile the hour away—a pastime
slight

Till he shall step upon the platform :
right !

And, now thus much is settled, cast in
rough,

Proved feasible, be counselled ! thought
enough,—

Slumber, Sordello ! any day will serve :
Were it a less digested plan ! how

swerve
To-morrow ? Meanwhile eat these sun-
dried grapes,

And watch the soaring hawk there !
Life escapes

Merrily thus.
He thoroughly read o'er

His truchman Naddo's missive six times
more,

Praying him visit Mantua and supply
A famished world.

The evening star was high
When he reached Mantua, but his fame

arrived
Before him : friends applauded, foes
connived,

And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
Angels, and all these angels would be
blest

Supremely by a song—the thrice-
renowned

Goito manufacture. Then he found
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
A sore annoyance; 'twas the song's
effect

He cared for, scarce the song itself:
reflect!

In the past life, what might be singing's
use?

Just to delight his Delians, whose pro-
fuse

Praise, not the toilsome process which
procured

That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams
abjured,

No over-leaping means for ends—take
both

For granted or take neither! I am loth
To say the hymns at last were Eglamor's;
But Naddo, chuckling, bade com-
petitors

Go pine; 'the master certes meant to
waste

No effort, cautiously had probed the
taste

He'd please anon: true bard, in short,
disturb

His title if they could; nor spur nor
curb,

Fancy nor reason, wanting in him;
whence

The staple of his verses, common sense:
He built on man's broad nature—gift
of gifts,

That power to build! The world con-
tented shifts

With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak
(The having eyes to see and tongue to
speak)

With our herd's stupid sterling happi-
ness

So plainly incompatible that—yes—
Yes—should a son of his improve the
breed

And turn out poet, he were cursed
indeed!

'Well, there's Goito and its woods anon,
If the worst happen; best go stoutly on
Now!' thought Sordello.

Ay, and goes on yet!

You pother with your glossaries to get
A notion of the Troubadour's intent
In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent—
Much as you study arras how to twirl
His angelot, plaything of page and girl,
Once; but you surely reach, at last,—
or, no!

Neverquite reach what struck the people
so,

As from the welter of their time he drew
Its elements successively to view,
Followed all actions backward on their
course,

And catching up, unmingled at the source,
Such a strength, such a weakness, added
then

A touch or two, and turned them into
men.

Virtue took form, nor vice refused a
shape;

Here heaven opened, there was hell
agape,

As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
Sinner the other flared portentous by
A greedy people. Then why stop,
surprised

At his success? The scheme was realized
Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as
loud

To speak, delicious homage to receive,
The woman's breath to feel upon his
sleeve,

Who said, 'But Anafest—why asks he
less

Than Lucio, in your verses? how con-
fess,

It seemed too much but yestereve!'—
the youth,

Who bade him earnestly, 'Avow the
truth!

You love Bianca, surely, from your
song;

I knew I was unworthy!'—soft or
strong,

In poured such tributes ere he had ar-
ranged

Ethereal ways to take them, sorted,
changed,

Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From real life, fain relinquish pedestal
And condescend with pleasures—one
and all

To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to
chain

Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frus-
trated, sure,

His prime design; each joy must he
abjure

Even for love of it.

He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page
He look because, at the first line, a proof
'Twas heard salutes him from the
cavern-roof?

'On! Give yourself, excluding aught
beside,

To the day's task; compel your slave
provide

Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours,
in brief—

Cannot men bear, now, something
better?—fly

A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
Of essences? the period sure has ceased
For such: present us with ourselves, at
least,

Not portions of ourselves, mere loves
and hates

Made flesh: wait not!'

While the poet waits
However. The first trial was enough:
He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it
writhe

Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light—his Language.

How he sought
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow
re-wrought

That Language,—welding words into
the crude

Mass from the new speech round him, till
a rude

Armour was hammered out, in time to
be

Approved beyond the Roman panoply

Melted to make it,—boots not. This
obtained

With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took

An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result—a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.

Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!'
Fond essay!

Piece after piece that armour broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that
he sought

To clothe, reject so pure a work of
thought

As language: thought may take per-
ception's place

But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment—of the
whole

By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception? painfully it
tacks

Thought to thought, which Sordello,
needing such,

Has rent perception into: it's to clutch
And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,
Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a
Muse

As to become Apollo. 'For the rest,
E'en if some wondrous vehicle exprest
The whole dream, what impertinence in
me

So to express it, who myself can be
The dream! nor, on the other hand, are
those

I sing to, over-likely to suppose
A higher than the highest I present
Now, which they praise already: be
content

Both parties, rather—they with the old
verse,

And I with the old praise—far go, fare
worse!'

A few adhering rivets loosed, up-
springs

The angel, sparkles off his mail, and
rings

Whirled from each delicatest limb it
warps,

As might Apollo from the sudden corps

Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless
quoits.

He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.

Then came
The world's revenge: their pleasure,
now his aim

Merely,—what was it? 'Not to play
the fool

So much as learn our lesson in your
school!'

Replied the world. He found that,
every time

He gained applause by any ballad-
rhyme,

His auditory recognized no jot
As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was
dunce

Sufficient to believe him—all, at once.
His will . . . conceive it caring for his
will!

—Mantuan, the main of them, ad-
miring still

How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
Had Montfort at completely (so to
speak)

His fingers' ends; while past the praise-
tide swept

To Montfort, either's share distinctly
kept:

The true meed for true merit!—his
abates

Into a sort he most repudiates,
And on them angrily he turns. Who
were

The Mantuan, after all, that he should
care

About their recognition, ay or no?
In spite of the convention months ago,
(Why blink the truth?) was not he
forced to help

This same ungrateful audience, every
whelp

Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for
peers

With the bright band of old Goito years,
As erst he toiled for flower or tree?

Why, there
Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he
strewn

A fairy dust upon that multitude,

Although he feigned to take them by
themselves;

His giants dignified those puny elves,
Sublimed their faint applause. In
short, he found

Himself still footing a delusive round,
Remote as ever from the self-display
He meant to compass, hampered every
way

By what he hoped assistance. Where-
fore then

Continue, make believe to find in men
—use he found not?

Weeks, months, years went by;
And, lo, Sordello vanished utterly,

Sundered in twain; each spectral part
at strife

With each; one jarred against another
life;

The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there; let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to
wit—

That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods)—of incurring
scoff

From the Man-portion not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's
scheme,

Though ne'er so bright; that sauntered
forth in dream,

Drest any how, nor waited mystic
frames,

Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
But just his sorry self—who yet might be
Sorrier for aught he in reality

Achieved, so opinioned That the Poet-part,
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art
Developing his soul a thousand ways—
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze

The multitude with majesties, convince
Each sort of nature, that same nature's
prince

Accosted it. Language, the makeshift,
grew

Into a bravest of expedients, too;
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had
thrown

Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone

Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's
work went

To tune a crazy tenzon or sirvent—
So hampered him the Man-part, thrust
to judge

Between the bard and the bard's
audience, grudge

A minute's toil that missed its due
reward!

But the complete Sordello, Man and
Bard,

John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the
land,

That on the sea, with open in his hand
A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.

And if internal struggles to be one
That frittered him incessantly piecemeal,
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
Mantuan! intruding ever with some
call

To action while he pondered, once for
all,

Which looked the easier effort—to
pursue

This course, still leap o'er paltry joys,
yearn through

The present ill-appreciated stage
Of self-revelment, and compel the age
Know him; or else, forswearing bard-
craft, wake

From out his lethargy and nobly shake
Off timid habits of denial, mix

With men, enjoy like men. Ere he
could fix

On aught, in rushed the Mantuan; ;
much they cared

For his perplexity! Thus unprepared,
The obvious if not only shelter lay

In deeds, the dull conventions of his day
Prescribed the like of him: why not be
glad

'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or
bad,

Submits to this and that established
rule?

Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
His murrey-coloured robe for philamot,

And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it
not,

Such vigour? Then, a sorrow to the
heart,

His talk! Whatever topics they might
start,

Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them
by guess.

Only obliged to ask himself, 'What was,'
A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to con-
dense

Itself into a period; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped

At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
They matched rare specimens the

Mantuan flock
Regaled him with, each talker from his
stock

Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,

Fruits like the fig-tree's, rather-ripe,
rotten-rich,

Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a prac-
tice which

He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights

restrained;
For, at conjecture how might words

appear
To others, playing there what happened

here,
And occupied abroad by what he

spurned
At home, 'twas slept, the occasion he

returned
To seize: he'd strike that lyre adroitly

—speech,
Would but a twenty-cubit plectre

reach;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,

Were both brought close; each excel-
lency went

For nothing else. The question Naddo
asked,

Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More

disgust
And more! why move his soul, since

move it must
At a minute's notice or as good it failed

To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use

This quip, that maxim, ventured re-
produce

Gestures and tones—at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much

sought

All able to achieve what they achieve—

That is, just nothing—in one point abide
 Profounder simpletons than all beside.
 Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are
 a bard
 Must constitute your prime, nay sole,
 reward!’
 So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe
 Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe
 What grubs or nips, or rubs, or rips—
 your louse
 For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,
 Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,
 Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
 By implements it sedulous employs
 To undertake, lay down, mete out, o’er-
 toise
 Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude
 At once! They settled stanchly;
 shame ensued:
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
 To the last fool who turned him round
 his thumb,
 As Naddo styled it! ’Twas not worth
 oppose
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those
 He aimed at getting rid of; better
 think
 Their thoughts and speak their speech,
 secure to slink
 Back expeditiously to his safe place,
 And chew the cud—what he and what
 his race
 Were really, each of them. Yet even
 this
 Conformity was partial. He would
 miss
 Some point, brought into contact with
 them ere
 Assured in what small segment of the
 sphere
 Of his existence they attended him:
 Whence blunders—falsehoods rectify—
 a grim
 List—slur it over! How? If dreams
 were tried,
 His will swayed sicklily from side to
 side,
 Nor merely neutralized his waking act
 But tended e’en in fancy to distract

The intermediate will, the choice of
 means.
 He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan
 scenes
 Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,
 Handsomely reckless, full to running o’er
 Of gallantries; ‘abjure the soul, content
 With body, therefore!’ Scarcely had
 he bent
 Himself in dream thus low, when matter
 fast
 Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
 And task it duly; by advances slight,
 The simple stuff becoming composite,
 Count Lori grew Apollo—best recall
 His fancy! Then would some rough
 peasant-Paul,
 Like those old Ecelin confers with,
 glance
 His gay apparel o’er; that countenance
 Gathered his shattered fancy into one,
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone
 Sufficed the grey Paulician: by and by,
 To balance the ethereality,
 Passions were needed; foiled he sunk
 again.
 Meanwhile the world rejoiced (’tis
 time explain)
 Because a sudden sickness set it free
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-
 bee,
 Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed;
 at once
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
 Blackened the valley. ‘I am sick too,
 old,
 Half crazed I think; what good’s the
 Kaiser’s gold
 To such an one? God help me! for I
 catch
 My children’s greedy sparkling eyes at
 watch—
 He bears that double breastplate on,
 they say,
 So many minutes less than yesterday!
 Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees
 Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God
 shall please
 Exact a punishment for many things
 You know, and some you never knew;
 which brings

To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix
And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count
himself

Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and
Guelf

Mean to embrace each other.' So began
Romano's missive to his fighting-man
Taurello—on the Tuscan's death, away
With Friedrich sworn to sail from
Naples' bay

Next month for Syria. Never thunder-
clap

Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap
Startled him. 'That accursed Vicenza! I
Absent, and she selects this time to die!
Ho, fellows, for Vicenza!' Half a score
Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
Romano in his reeking spurs: too late—
'Boniface urged me, Este could not
wait.'

The chieftain stammered; 'let me die
in peace—

Forget me! Was it I e'er craved increase
Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot
your worst

Against the Father: as you found me
first

So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma,
sure,

Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—
Only be pacified!'

The country rung
With such a piece of news: on every
tongue,

How Ecelin's great servant, congeed off,
Had done a long day's service, so, might
doff

The green and yellow, and recover
breath

At Mantua, whither,—since Retrude's
death,

(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
From Otho's House, he carried to reside
At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
A structure worthy her imperial style,
The gardens raise, the statues there en-
shrine,

She never lived to see)—although his
line

Was ancient in her archives and she
took

A pride in him, that city, nor forsook

Her child when he forsook himself and
spent

A prowess on Romano surely meant
For his own growth—whither he ne'er
resorts

If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
Were shows to greet him. 'Take a
friend's advice,'

Quoth Naddo to Sordello, 'nor be
rash

Because your rivals (nothing can abash
Some folks) demur that we pronounced
you best

To sound the great man's welcome; 'tis
a test,

Remember! Strojavacca looks askint,
The rough fat sloven; and there's
plenty hint

Your pinions have received of late a
shock—

Out-soar them, cobsman of the silver
flock!

Sing well! 'A signal wonder, song's
no whit

Facilitated.

Fast the minutes flit;
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring
The soldier, and he cannot choose but
sing;

So, a last shift, quits Mantua—slow,
alone:

Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
Song must be struck. What occupies
that front?

Just how he was more awkward than
his wont

The night before, when Naddo, who had
seen

Taurello on his progress, praised the
mien

For dignity no crosses could affect—
Such was a joy, and might not he detect
A satisfaction if established joys
Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys
Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses
may come

Or keep away! And thus he wandered,
dumb

Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly
spent,

On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he
went,

Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
The moon came out ; like features of a
face

A querulous fraternity of pines,
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and
grovelling vines

Also came out, made gradually up
The picture; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup
And castle. He had dropped through
one defile

He never dared explore, the Chief ere-
while

Had vanished by. Back rushed the
dream, enwrapped

Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they
lapped,

Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel
meant

To wear his soul away in discontent,
Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart
and brain

Swelled ; he expanded to himself again.
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved
and frail,

Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail
Crusted into the porphyry pavement
smooth,

—Suffered remain just as it sprung, to
soothe

The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret,—
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
And flung into the common court beside
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello !

Soon
Was he low muttering, beneath the
moon,

Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,—
Since from the purpose, he maintained
before,

Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
Ah, the slim castle ! dwindled of late
years,

But more mysterious ; gone to ruin—
trails

Of vine through every loop-hole.
Nought avails

The night as, torch in hand, he must
explore

The maple chamber—did I say, its floor
Was made of intersecting cedar beams ?
Worn now with gaps so large, there
blew cold streams

Of air quite from the dungeon ; lay your
ear

Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear
In the blind darkness water drop. The
nests

And nooks retained their long ranged
vesture-chests

Empty and smelling of the iris-root
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that
day,

Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
Beside the Carian group preserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting
Will,

Had been at the commencement proved
unfit ;

That for Reflecting, Demonstrating it,
Mankind—no fitter : was the Will Itself
In fault ?

His forehead pressed the
moonlit shelf

Beside the youngest marble maid awhile ;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long
smile,

' I shall be king again ! ' as he with-
drew

The envied scarf ; into the font he threw
His crown.

Next day, no poet ! ' Where-
fore ? ' asked

Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs,
masked

As devils, ended ; ' don't a song come
next ? '

The master of the pageant looked per-
plexed

Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.
' His Highness knew what poets were :
in brief,

Had not the tethyrace prescriptive right
To peevishness, caprice ? or, call it spite,
One must receive their nature in its
length

And breadth, expect the weakness with
the strength ! '

—So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases
spent,

The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
Settled his portly person, smoothed his
chin,

And nodded that the bull-bait might
begin.

BOOK THE THIRD

AND the font took them : let our laurels
lie !
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
Because oncemore Goito gets, oncemore,
Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew ;
Quiet those throbbing temples, then,
subdue
That cheek's distortion ! Nature's strict
embrace,
Putting aside the Past, shall soon efface
Its print as well—factitious humours
grown
Over the true—loves, hatreds not his
own—
And turn him pure as some forgotten
vest
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-
sheeted lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
I' the sea, and vexed a satrap ; so the
stain
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its
pain,
Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening
escapes,
Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar
shapes
Die, fair and foul die, fading as they
flit,
Men, women, and the pathos and the
wit,
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile
or sigh
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.
The last face glances through the
eglantines,
The last voice murmurs 'twixt the
blossomed vines
Of Men, of that machine supplied by
thought
To compass self-perception with, he
sought
By forcing half himself—an insane pulse
Of a god's blood, on clay it could con-
vulse,
Never transmute—on human sights and
sounds,
To watch the other half with ; irksome
bounds

It ebbs from to its source, a fountain
sealed
Forever. Better sure be unrevealed
Than part-revealed : Sordello well or ill
Is finished : then what further use of
Will,
A point in the prime idea not realized,
An oversight ? inordinately prized,
No less, and pampered with enough of
each
Delight to prove the whole above its
reach.
' To need become all natures, yet retain
The law of my own nature—to re-
main
Myself, yet yearn . . . as if that chestnut,
think,
Should yearn for this first larch-bloom
crisp and pink,
Or those pale fragrant tears where
zephyrs stanch
March wounds along the fretted pine-
tree branch !
Will and the means to show will, great
and small,
Material, spiritual,—abjure them all
Save any so distinct, they may be left
To amuse, not tempt become ! and,
thus bereft,
Just as I first was fashioned would I be !
Nor, Moon, is it Apollo now, but me
Thou visitest to comfort and befriend !
Swim thou into my heart, and there an
end,
Since I possess thee !—nay, thus shut
mine eyes
And know, quite know, by this heart's
fall and rise,
When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and
when
Out-standest : wherefore practise upon
men
To make that plainer to myself ?
Slide here
Over a sweet and solitary year
Wasted : or simply notice change in
him—
How eyes, bright with exploring once,
grew dim
And satiate with receiving. Some dis-
tress
Was caused, too, by a sort of conscious-
ness

Under the imbecility,—nought kept
That down ; he slept, but was aware he
slept,

So, frustrated : as who brainsick made
pact

Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet still distinguished
slow

His own blood's measured clicking at
his brow.

To finish. One declining Autumn
day—

Few birds about the heaven chill and
grey,

No wind that cared trouble the tacit
woods—

He sauntered home complacently, their
moods

According, his and Nature's. Every
spark

Of Mantua life was trodden out ; so
dark

The embers, that the Troubadour, who
sung

Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his
tongue,

Its craft his brain, how either brought
to pass

Singing at all ; that faculty might
class

With any of Apollo's now. The year
Began to find its early promise sere

As well. Thus beauty vanishes ; thus
stone

Outliers flesh : Nature's and his youth
gone,

They left the world to you, and wished
you joy.

When, stopping his benevolent employ,
A presageshuddered through the welkin ;
harsh

The earth's remonstrance followed.
'Twas the marsh

Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next
morning's face,

And, where the mists broke up immense
and white

I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth
of light

Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.

And here was Nature, bound by the
same bars

Of fate with him !

'No ! youth once gone is gone :
Deeds let escape are never to be done.

Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year ;
for us—

Oh forfeit I unalterably thus

My chance ? nor two lives wait me,
this to spend

Learning save that ? Nature has time
to mend

Mistake, she knows occasion will recur—
Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her

With her magnificent resources ?—I
Must perish once and perish utterly !

Not any strollings now at even-close
Down the field-path, Sordello ! by
thorn-rows

Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots
of fire

And dew, outlining the black cypress'
spire

She waits you at, Elys, who heard you
first

Woo her, the snow-month through, but
ere she durst

Answer 'twas April ! Linden-flower-
time-long

Her eyes were on the ground ; 'tis July,
strong

Now ; and because white dust-clouds
overwhelm

The woodside, here or by the village elm
That holds the moon, she meets you,
somewhat pale,

But letting you lift up her coarse flax
veil

And whisper (the damp little hand in
yours)

Of love, heart's love, your heart's love
that endures

Till death. Tush ! No mad mixing
with the rout

Of haggard ribalds wandering about
The hot torchlit wine-scented island-
house

Where Friedrich holds his wickedest
carouse,

Parading,—to the gay Palermitans,
Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans

Nuocera holds,—those tall grave
dazzling Norse,

High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed
whiter than the morse,

Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,
 He sent his barks to fetch through icy
 seas,
 The blind night seas without a saving
 star,
 And here in snowy birdskin robes they
 are,
 Sordello !—here, mollitious alcoves gilt
 Superb as Byzant domes that devils
 built !
 —Ah, Byzant, there again ! no chance
 to go
 Ever like august pleasant Dandolo,
 Worshipping hearts about him for a
 wall,
 Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years
 and all,
 Through vanquished Byzant where
 friends note for him
 What pillar, marble massive, sardius
 slim,
 'Twere fittest he transport to Venice'
 Square—
 Flattered and promised life to touch
 them there
 Soon, by his fervid sons of senators !
 No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds,
 peaces, wars—
 Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be !
 Points in the life I waited ! what are ye
 But roundels of a ladder which appeared
 Awhile the very platform it was reared
 To lift me on ?—that happiness I find
 Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
 Instinct which bade forego you all unless
 Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happi-
 ness
 Awaited me ; the way life should be
 used
 Was to acquire, and deeds like you con-
 ducted
 To teach it by a self-revelment, deemed
 The very use, so long ! Whatever seemed
 Progress to that, was pleasure ; aught
 that stayed
 My reaching it—no pleasure. I have
 laid
 The ladder down ; I climb not ; still,
 aloft
 The platform stretches ! Bliss strong
 and soft,
 I dared not entertain, elude me ; yet
 Never of what they promised could I get

A glimpse till now ! The common sort,
 the crowd
 Exist, perceive ; with Being are en-
 dowed,
 However slight, distinct from what they
 See,
 However bounded: Happiness must be,
 To feed the first by gleanings from the
 last,
 Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
 Become what they behold ; such peace-
 in-strife
 By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
 Tho Alien turning Native to the soul
 Or body—which instructs me ; I am
 whole
 There and demand a Palma ; had the
 world
 Been from my soul to a like distance
 hurled,
 'Twere Happiness to make it one with
 me—
 Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
 Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend
 In spirit now ; and this done, what 's to
 blend
 With ? Nought is Alien in the world—
 my Will
 Owns all already ; yet can turn it still
 Less Native, since my Means to corre-
 spond
 With Will are so unworthy, 'twas my
 bond
 To tread the very joys that tantalize
 Most now, into a grave never to rise.
 I die then ! Will the rest agree to die ?
 Next Age or no ? Shall its Sordello try
 Clue after clue, and catch at last the
 clue
 I miss ?—that 's underneath my finger
 too,
 Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some
 yearning traced
 Deeper, some petty consequence em-
 braced
 Closer ! Why fled I Mantua, then ?—
 complained
 So much my Will was fettered, yet
 remained
 Content within a tether half the range,
 I could assign it ?—able to exchange
 My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and
 Idle because I could thus understand—

Could e'en have penetrated to its core
 Our mortal mystery, and yet forbore,
 Preferred elaborating in the dark
 My casual stuff, by any wretched spark
 Born of my predecessors, though one
 stroke
 Of mine had brought the flame forth!
 Mantua's yoke,
 My minstrel's-trade, was to behold
 mankind,—
 My own concernment—just to bring my
 mind
 Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,
 Each object suffered stifle in the mist
 Which hazard, use and blindness could
 impose
 In their relation to myself.'

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs
 Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
 Onward.

'Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
 Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid
 drops

Under a humid finger; while there
 fleets,

Outside the screen, a pageant time
 repeats

Never again! To be deposed—immured
 Clandestinely—still petted, still assured
 To govern were fatiguing work—the
 Sight

Fleeting meanwhile! 'Tis noontide:
 wreak ere night

Somehow my will upon it, rather!
 Slake

This thirst somehow, the poorest im-
 press take

That serves! A blasted bud displays
 you, torn,

Faint rudiments of the full flower un-
 born;

But who divines what glory coats o'er-
 clasp

Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's
 grasp

Taurello sent'

'Taurello? Palma sent
 Your Trouvere,' (Naddo interposing
 leant

Over the lost bard's shoulder)—'and,
 believe,

You cannot more reluctantly receive

Than I pronounce her message: we
 depart

Together. What avail a poet's heart
 Verona's poms and gauds? five blades
 of grass

Suffice him. News? Why, where your
 marish was,

On its mud-banks smoke fast rises after
 smoke

I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-
 broke.

Oh, the world's tidings! small your
 thanks, I guess,

For them. The father of our Patroness,
 Has played Taurello an astounding
 trick,

Parts between Ecelin and Alberic

His wealth and goes into a convent:
 both

Wed Guefs: the Count and Palma
 plighted troth

A week since at Verona: and they
 want

You doubtless to contrive the marriage-
 chant

Ere Richard storms Ferrara.' Hero
 was told

The tale from the beginning—how,
 made bold

By Salinguerra's absence, Guefs had
 burned

And pillaged till he unawares returned
 To take revenge: how Azzo and his
 friend

Were doing their endeavour, how the
 end

Of the siege was nigh, and how the
 Count, released

From further care, would with his
 marriage-feast

Inaugurate a new and better rule,
 Absorbing thus Romano.

'Shall I school
 My master,' added Naddo, 'and suggest

How you may clothe in a poetic vesture
 These doings, at Verona? Your res-
 ponse

To Palma! Wherefore jest? "Depart
 at once?"

A good resolve! In truth, I hardly
 hoped

So prompt an acquiescence. Have you
 groped

Out wisdom in the wilds here?—

Thoughts may be
Over-poetical for poetry.

Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's
neck;

And yet what spoils an orient like some
speck

Of genuine white, turning its own white
grey?

You take me? Curse the cicale!'

One more day.

One eve—appears Verona! Many a
group,

(You mind) instructed of the osprey's
swoop

On lynx and ounce, was gathering—
Christendom

Sure to receive, whate'er the end was,
from

The evening's purpose cheer or detri-
ment,

Since Friedrich only waited some event
Like this, of Ghibellins establishing

Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King
Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there,

wage
Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
His barons from the burghers, and

restore
The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
By Hildebrand.

In the palace, each by each,
Sordello sat and Palma: little speech

At first in that dim closet, face with face
{Despite the tumult in the market-

place)
Exchanging quick low laughs: now

would rush
Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,

A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—
But for the most part their two histories

Ran best thro' the locked fingers and
linked arms.

And so the night flew on with its alarms
Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;

'Now, Lady!' gasped he. Then arose
the two

And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.
A balcony lay black beneath until

Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-
haired men

Came on it and harangued the people:
then

Sea-like that people surging to and fro
Shouted, 'Hale forth the Carroch—

trumpets, ho,
A flourish! run! in the ancient grooves—

Back from the bell! Hammer! that
whom behoves

May hear the League is up! Peal!
learn who list,

Verona means not be the first break
tryst

To-morrow with the League!'
Enough. Now turn—

Over the eastern cypresses: discern—
Is any beacon set a-glimmer?

Rang
The air with shouts that overpowered
the clang

Of the incessant carroch, even:
'Haste—

The Candle's at the gateway! ere it
waste,

Each soldier stand beside it, armed to
march

With Tiso Sampier through the eastern
arch!'

Ferrara's succoured, Palma!

Once again
They sat together; some strange thing
in train

To say, so difficult was Palma's place
In taking, with a coy fastidious grace

Like the bird's flutter ere it fix and
feed.

But when she felt she held her friend
indeed

Safe, she threw back her curls, began
implant

Her lessons; telling of another want
Goito's quiet nourished than his own;

Palma—to serve, as him—be served,
alone

Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralized
The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised

If, while Sordello fain had captive led
Nature, in dream was Palma wholly

subjected
To some out-soul, which dawned not
though she pined

Delaying till its advent, heart and mind,
Their life. 'How dared I let expand

the force
Within me, till some out-soul, whose
resource

It grew for, should direct it ? Every
 law
 Of life, its every fitness, every flaw,
 Must One determine whose corporeal
 shape
 Would be no other than the prime
 escape
 And revelation to me of a Will
 Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable
 Above, save at the point which, I should
 know,
 Shone that myself, my powers, might
 overflow
 So far, so much ; as now it signified
 Which earthly shape it henceforth chose
 my guide,
 Whose mortal lip selected to declare
 Its oracles, what fleshly garb would
 wear ;
 —The first of intimations, whom to love ;
 The next, how love him. Seemed that
 orb, above
 The castle-covert and the mountain-
 close,
 Slow in appearing,—if beneath it rose
 Cravings, aversions,—did our green
 precinct
 Take pride in me, at unawares distinct
 With this or that endowment,—how,
 represt
 At once, such jetting power shrunk to
 the rest !
 Was I to have a chance touch spoil me,
 leave
 My spirit thence unfitted to receive
 The consummating spell ? —that spell
 so near
 Moreover ! “ Waits he not the waking
 year ?
 His almond-blossoms must be honey-
 ripe
 By this ; to welcome him, fresh runnels
 stripe
 The thawed ravines ; because of him,
 the wind
 Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
 Him now ! ”
 And chief, that earnest April morn
 Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so
 worn
 And white my cheek, so idly my blood
 beat,
 Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet

And saying as she prompted ; till out-
 burst
 One face from all the faces—not then
 first
 I knew it ; where in maple chamber
 gloom :
 Crowned with what sanguine-heart
 pomegranate blooms
 Advanced it ever ? Men's acknow-
 ledgment
 Sanctioned my own : 'twas taken,
 Palma's bent,—
 Sordello, accepted.
 And the Tuscan dumb
 Sat scheming, scheming. Ecelin would
 come
 Gaunt, scared, “ Cesano baffles me,”
 he'd say :
 “ Better I fought it out, my father's way !
 Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,
 And you and your Taurello yonder—
 what 's
 Romano's business there ? ” An hour's
 concern
 To cure the froward Chief !—induced
 return
 Much heartened from those overmeaning
 eyes,
 Wound up to persevere,—his enterprise
 Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
 Apportioned,—she at liberty to sit
 Ard scheme against the next emergence,
 I—
 To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
 Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope
 For leave command those steely shafts
 shoot ope,
 Or straight assuage their blinding eager-
 ness
 To blank smooth snow. What sem-
 blance of success
 To any of my plans for making you
 Mine and Romano's ? Break the first
 wall through,
 Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant
 His sons beside, still, vainest were the
 vaunt :
 There, Salinguerra would obstruct me
 sheer,
 And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
 Stayed me ! But one wild eve that Lady
 died
 In her lone chamber : only I beside :

Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
 At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
 With Alberic. She held me thus—a
 clutch
 To make our spirits as our bodies
 touch—
 And so began flinging the Past up, heaps
 Of uncouth treasure from their sunless
 sleeps
 Within her soul; deeds rose along with
 dreams,
 Fragments of many miserable schemes,
 Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the
 last—
 'Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the
 Past,
 How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up
 her face
 —All left of it, into one arch-grimace
 To die with . . .
 Friend, 'tis gone! but not the fear
 Of that fell laughing, heard as now I
 hear.
 Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart
 grow weak,
 When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to
 speak
 —Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark!—
 for in
 Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin
 (How summoned, who divines?)—
 looking as if
 He understood why Adelaide lay stiff
 Already in my arms; for, "Girl, how
 must
 I manage Este in the matter thrust
 Upon me, how unravel your bad coil?—
 Since" (he declared) "'tis on your brow
 —a soil
 Like hers, there!" then in the same
 breath, "he lacked
 No counsel after all, had signed no pact
 With devils, nor was treason here or
 thero,
 Goito or Vicenza, his affair:
 He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,
 Would begin life afresh, now,—would
 not slave
 For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake!
 What bootied him to meddle or to
 make
 In Lombardy?" And afterward I knew
 The meaning of his promise to undo

All she had done—why marriages were
 made,
 New friendships entered on, old followers
 paid
 With curses for their pains,—new
 friends' amaze
 At height, when, passing out by Gate
 St. Blaise,
 He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his
 head
 Over a friar's neck,—“had vowed,” he
 said,
 “Long since, nigh thirty years, because
 his wife
 And child were saved there, to bestow
 his life
 On God, his gettings on the Church.”
 Exiled
 Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
 My days and nights; 'twas found, the
 orb I sought
 To serve, those glimpses came of Fomal-
 haut,
 No other: but how serve it?—
 authorize
 You and Romano mingle destinies?
 And straight Romano's angel stood
 beside
 Me who had also been Bonifacio's
 bride,
 For Salinguerra 'twas, with neck low
 bent,
 And voice lightened to music, (as he
 meant
 To learn not teach me,) who withdrew
 the pall
 From the dead Past and straight revived
 it all,
 Making me see how first Romano waxed,
 Wherefore he waned now, why, if I
 relaxed
 My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing
 effete,
 Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
 Its course, and counting every step
 astray
 A gain so much. Romano, every way
 Stable, a Lombard House now—why
 start back
 Into the very outset of its track?
 This patching-principle which late allied
 Our House with other Houses—what
 beside

Concerned the apparition, the first
Knight

Who followed Conrad hither in such
plight

His utmost wealth was summed in his
one steed ?

For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
A task, in the beginning hazardous
To him as ever task can be to us ;
But did the weather-beaten thief despair
When first our crystal cincture of warm
air,—

That binds the Trevisan,—as its spice-
belt

(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus
dwelt,—

Furtive he pierced, and Este was to
face—

Despaired Saponian strength of Lom-
bard grace ?

Tried he at making surer aught made
sure,

Maturing what already was mature ?
No ; his heart prompted Ecelo, " Con-
front

Este, inspect yourself. What 's nature ?
Wont.

Discard three-parts your nature, and
adopt

The rest as an advantage ! " Old strength
propped

The man who first grew Podestà among
The Vincentines, no less than, while
there sprung

His palace up in Padua like a threat,
Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed
yet

In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object
gained,

Romano was established—has re-
mained—

For are you not Italian, truly peers
With Este ? " Azze " better soothes our
ears

Than " Alberic ? " or is this lion's-crine
From over-mounts " (this yellow hair of
mine)

" So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock ? "
(Thus went he on with something of a
mock)

" Wherefore recoil, then, from the very
fate

Conceded you, refuse to imitate

Your model farther ? Este long since
left

Being mere Este : as a blade its heft,
Este required the Pope to further him :

And you, the Kaiser—whom your
father's whim

Foregoes or, better, never shall forego
If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo

Commenced, but Ecelm desists from :
just

As Adelaide of Susa could intrust
Her donative,—her Piedmont given the

Pope,
Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope

'Twixt France and Italy,—to the
superb

Matilda's perfecting,—so, lest aught
curb

Our Adelaide's great counter-project for
(giving her Trentine to the Emperor

With passage here from Germany,—
shall you

Take it,—my slender plodding talent,
too ! "

—Urged me Taurello with his half-smile.
He

As Patron of the scattered family
Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in
bruit

Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit
Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,

" Nothing remains," Taurello said, " but
wait

Some rash procedure : Palma was the
link,

As Agnes' child, between us, and they
shrink

From losing Palma : judge if we ad-
vance,

Your father's method, your inheritance ! "

That day I was betrothed to Boniface
At Padua by Taurello's self, took place

The outrage of the Ferrarese : again,
That day I sought Verona with the
train

Agreed for,—by Taurello's policy
Convicting Richard of the fault, since we

Were present to annul or to confirm,—
Richard, whose patience had outstayed
its term,

Quitted Verona for the siege.
And now

What glory may engird Sordello's brow

Through this ? A month since at Oliero
slunk

All that was Ecelin into a monk ;
But how could Salinguerra so forget
His liege of thirty years as grudge even
yet

One effort to recover him ? He sent
Forthwith the tidings of this last event
To Ecelin—declared that he, despite
The recent folly, recognized his right
To order Salinguerra : “ Should he
wring

Its uttermost advantage out, or fling
This chance away ? Or were his sons
now Head

Of the House ? ” Through me Taurello’s
missive sped ;

My father’s answer will by me return.
Behold ! “ For him,” he writes, “ no
more concern

With strife than, for his children, with
fresh plots

Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he
blots

For aye : Taurello shall no more sub-
serve,

Nor Ecelin impose.” Lest this unnerve
Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip
Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,—

I, in his sons’ default (who, mating with
Este, forsake Romano as the frith
Its mainsea for the firmland, sea makes
head

Against) I stand, Romano,—in their
stead

Assume the station they desert, and give
Still, as the Kaiser’s representative,
Taurello licence he demands. Mid-
night—

Morning—by noon to-morrow, making
light

Of the League’s issue, we, in some gay
weed

Like yours, disguised together, may
precede

The arbitrators to Ferrara : reach
Him, let Taurello’s noble accents teach
The rest ! then say if I have miscon-
ceived

Your destiny, too readily believed
The Kaiser’s cause your own ! ’

And Palma’s fled.
Though no affirmative disturbs the head,

A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o’er,
Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,
Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be
Gate-vein of this heart’s blood of
Lombardy,

Soul of this body—to wield this aggre-
gate

Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
Though he should live—a centre of
disgust

Even—apart, core of the outward crust
He vivified, assimilated. Thus

I bring Sordello to the rapturous
Exclaim at the crowd’s cry, because one
round

Of life was quite accomplished ; and he
found

Not only that a soul, whate’er its might,
Is insufficient to its own delight,

Both in corporeal organs and in skill
By means of such to body forth its
Will—

And, after, insufficient to apprise
Men of that Will, oblige them recognize

The Hid by the Revealed—but that, the
last

Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,
His Will, bade abdicate, which would
not void

The throne, might sit there, suffer be
enjoyed

Mankind, a varied and divine array
Incapable of homage, the first way,

Nor fit to render incidentally
Tribute connived at, taken by the by,

In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
The ignominious exile of mankind—

Whose proper service, ascertained intact
As yet, (to be by him themselves made
act,

Not watch Sordello acting each of them)
Was to secure—if the true diadem

Seemed imminent while our Sordello
drank

The wisdom of that golden Palma,—
thank

Verona’s Lady in her Citadel
Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends
tell :

And truly when she left him, the sun
reared

A head like the first clamberer’s that
peered

A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
With triumph, triumphing till Manlius
came.

Nor slight too much my rhymes—that
spring, disspread,

Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels! Rather say,
My transcendental platan! mounting
gay

(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
With tremulous silvered trunk, whence
branches sheen

Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver
soon

With coloured buds, then glowing like
the moon

One mild flame,—last a pause, a burst,
and all

Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and
leaf-dust,

Ending the weird work prosecuted just
For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,
Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may
mark

Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so!
Only, as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put
aside

Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
Out of the world he fills, and leave it
mute

For myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
O' the consciousness! They sleep, and
I awake

O'er the lagune.

Sordello said once, 'Note,
In just such songs as Eglamor (say)
wrote

With heart and soul and strength, for
he believed

Himself achieving all to be achieved
By singer—in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and singer
one,

And either's purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him: while from true works
(to wit

Sordello's dream-performances that will
Be never more than dreamed) escapes
there still

Some proof, the singer's proper life was
'neath

The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
To that; a passion and a knowledge far
Transcending these, majestic as they
are,

Smouldered; his lay was but an episode
In the bard's life: which evidence you
owed

To some slight weariness, some looking-
off

Or start-away. The childish skit or
scoff

In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed
divine

In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters!—what
may lurk

In that? "My life commenced before
that work,"

(Thus I interpret the significance
Of the bard's start aside and look
askance)

"My life continues after: on I fare
With no more stopping, possibly, no
care

To note the undercurrent, the why and
how,

Where; when, of the deeper life, as
thus just now.

But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas
For you! who sigh, 'When shall it
come to pass

We read that story? How will he com-
press

The future gains, his life's true business,
Into the better lay which—that one
flout,

Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out—
Engrosses him already, though pro-
fessed

To meditate with us eternal rest,
And partnership in all his life has
found?

'Tis but a sailor's promise, weather-
bound:

'Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark
be moored

For once, the awning stretched, the
poles assured!

Noontide above; except the wave's
crisp dash,

Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,

| | |
|--|---|
| The margin's silent: out with every spoil | Endures a month—a half month—if I make |
| Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil, | A queen of her, continue for her sake Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl |
| This serpent of a river to his head I' the midst! Admire each treasure, as we spread | Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl |
| The bank, to help us tell our history Aright: give ear, endeavour to descry The groves of giant rushes, how they grew | In the dead black Giudecca proves sea- weed |
| Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through, | Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed |
| What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent | Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post |
| Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went | For gondolas. |
| Till . . . may that beetle (shake your cap) attest | You sad disheveled ghost |
| The springing of a land-wind from the West! | That pluck at me and point, are you advised |
| —' Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day! | I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised |
| To-morrow, and the pageant's moved away | —Jewels in the locks that love no crownlet like |
| Down to the poorest tent-pole: we and you | Their native field-buds and the green wheat spike, |
| Part company: no other may pursue Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate | So fair!—who left this end of June's turmoil, |
| Intends, if triumph or decline await The tempter of the everlasting steppe.” | Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil, Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free |
| I muse this on a ruined palace-step | In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.) |
| At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit | Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess |
| Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit England gave birth to? Who's ador- able | There is such niggard stock of happiness To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch, |
| Enough reclaim a —— no Sordello's Will Alack!—be queen to me? That Bas- sanese | One labours ineffectually to stretch It o'er you so that mother and children, both |
| Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These | May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth! Divide the robe yet farther: be con- tent |
| Perhaps from our delicious Asolo Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves | With seeing just a score pre-eminent Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights, |
| To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves | Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights— |
| Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath | For, these in evidence, you clearer claim A like garb for the rest,—grace all, the same |
| The cool arch stoops she, brownest- cheek! Her wreath | As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength |
| | And health for each of you, not more— at length |

Grown wise, who asked at home that
 the whole race
 Might add the spirit's to the body's
 grace,
 And all be dizen'd out as chiefs and
 bards.
 But in this magic weather one discards
 Much old requirement—Venice seems
 a type
 Of Life,—'twixt blue and blue extends,
 a stripe,
 As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt
 nought and nought
 'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you
 sought
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone,
 Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
 As hinder Life the evil with the good
 Which make up Living, rightly under-
 stood.
 Only, do finish something! Peasants
 or queens,
 Take them, made happy by whatever
 means,
 Parade them for the common credit,
 vouch
 That a luckless residue, we send to
 crouch
 In corners out of sight, was just as
 framed
 For happiness, its portion might have
 claimed
 As well, and so, obtaining it, had
 stalked
 Fatuous as any!—such my project,
 baulked
 Already; I hardly venture to adjust
 The first rags, when you find me. To
 mistrust
 Me!—nor unreasonably. You, no
 doubt,
 Have the true knack of tiring suitors
 out
 With those thin lips on tremble, lashless
 eyes
 Inveterately tear-shot—there, be wise
 Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I
 meant
 You insult! Shall your friend (not slave)
 be shent
 For speaking home? Beside, care-bit,
 erased,
 Broken-up beauties ever took my taste

Supremely, and I love you more, far
 more
 Than her I looked should foot Life's
 temple-floor.
 Years ago, leagues at distance, when and
 where
 A whisper came, 'Let others seek!—
 thy care
 Is found, thy life's provision; if thy
 race
 Should be thy mistress, and into one
 face
 The many faces crowd?' Ah, had I,
 judge,
 Or no, your secret? Rough apparel—
 grudge
 All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
 To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn—
 Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
 Alone (that's saddest but it must be so)
 Through Venice, sing now and now
 glance aside,
 Aught desultory or undignified,—
 Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass
 Or not each formidable group, the mass
 Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
 God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
 And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
 Come timid up to me for alms? And
 then
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do
 Some unexampled grace!—when, wifom
 but you
 Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
 Further before you say, it is to sneer
 I call you ravishing; for I regret
 Little that she, whose early foot was set
 Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,
 Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall
 Toward me—no wreath, only a lip's
 unrest
 To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
 Dry of their tears upon my bosom.
 Strange
 Such sad chance should produce in thee
 such change,
 My love! warped souls and bodies! yet
 God spoke
 Of right-hand, foot and eye—selects
 our yoke,
 Sordello, as your poetship may find!
 So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor
 mind

Their foolish talk; we'll manage re-
 instate
 Your old worth; ask moreover, when
 they prate
 Of evil men past hope, 'don't each
 contrive,
 Despite the evil you abuse, to live?—
 Keeping, each losel, through a maze of
 lies,
 His own conceit of truth? to which he
 hies
 By obscure windings, tortuous, if you
 will,
 But to himself not inaccessible;
 He sees truth, and his lies are for the
 crowd
 Who cannot see; some fancied right
 allowed
 His vilest wrong, empowered the
 fellow clutch
 One pleasure from a multitude of such
 Denied him.' Then assert, 'all men
 appear
 To think all better than themselves, by
 here
 Trusting a crowd they wrong; but
 really,' say,
 'All men think all men stupider than
 they,
 Since, save themselves, no other com-
 prehends
 The complicated scheme to make amends
 —Evil, the scheme by which, thro'
 Ignorance,
 Good labours to exist.' A slight ad-
 vance,—
 Merely to find the sickness you die
 through,
 And nought beside! but if one can't
 eschew
 One's portion in the common lot, at
 least
 One can avoid an ignorance increased
 Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
 How nought were like dispensing with-
 out stint
 The water of life—so easy to dispense
 Beside, when one has probed the centre
 whence
 Commotion's born—could tell you of it
 all!
 '—Meantime, just meditate my
 madrigal

O' the mugwort that conceals a dew-
 drop safe!
 What, dullard? we and you in smothery
 chafe,
 Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far
 into Zin
 The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
 A hungry sun above us, sands that bung
 Our throats,—each dromedary lolls
 a tongue,
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy
 chap,
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's
 mishap,
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that
 spoke,
 —Remark, you wonder any one needs
 choke
 With founts about! Potsherd him,
 Gibeonites!
 While awkwardly enough your Moses
 smites
 The rock, though he forego his Promised
 Land,
 Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass,
 and
 Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah
 Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah!
 Then, quaffing at the fount my courage
 gained,
 Recall—not that 'I prompt ye—who
 explained . . .
 'Presumptuous!' interrupts one. You,
 not I
 'Tis, brother, marvel at and magnify
 Such office: 'office,' quotha? can we get
 To the beginning of the office yet?
 What do we here? simply experiment
 Each on the other's power and its intent
 When elsewhere tasked,—if this of mine
 were trucked
 For yours to either's good,—we watch
 construct,
 In short, an engine: with a finished one,
 What it can do, is all,—nought, how 'tis
 done.
 But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
 A kernel of strange wheelwork through
 its husk
 Grows into shape by quarters and by
 halves;
 Remark this tooth's spring, wonder
 what that valve's

Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,
Make out each other more or less precise—

The scope of the whole engine's to be proved ;

We die: which means to say, the whole's removed,

Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin,—

To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
Than the murky lodgment of our building-time.

And then, I grant you, it behoves forget
How 'tis done—all that must amuse us yet

So long : and, while you turn upon your heel,

Pray that I be not busy slitting steel
Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore

Under a cluster of fresh stars, before
I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!
So occupied, then, are we : hitherto,
At present, and a weary while to come,
The office of ourselves,—nor blind nor dumb,

And seeing somewhat of man's state,—
has been,

For the worst of us, to say they so have seen ;

For the better, what it was they saw ;
the best

Impart the gift of seeing to the rest :
' So that I glance,' says such an one,
' around,

And there's no face but I can read profound

Disclosures in ; this stands for hope,
that—fear,

And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here !

" Stoop, else the strings of blossom,
where the nuts

O'erarch, will blind thee ! said I not ?
she shuts

Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet !

Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,

Putting 'twixt me and madness ever—
more

Thy sweet shape, Zanze ! therefore stoop ! "

" That 's truth ! "
(Adjudge you) " the incarcerated youth
Would say that ! "

" Youth ? Plara the bard ?
Set down

That Plara spent his youth in a grim town

Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about

The minster for protection, never out
Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.

The brighter shone the suburb,—all the more

Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
Of any chance escape of joy,—some

roof,

Taller than they, allowed the rest detect
Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect
Who could, 'twas meant for laughter,
that ploughed check's

Repulsive gleam !) when the sun stopped both peaks

Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
Then sunk, a huge flame on its socket's edge,

With leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane
Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain—

The minster minded that ! in heaps the dust

Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,

Held Plara ; who, its denizen, bade hail
In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale."

" Exact the town, the minster and the street ! "

" As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat :

Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er

And sad : but Lucio's sad. I said before,

Love's sad, not Lucio ; one who loves may be

As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe :

'Tis of the mood itself I speak, what tinge

Determines it, else colourless,—or mirth,
Or melancholy, as from heaven or
earth."

"Ay, that's the variation's gist!"
Indeed?

Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!

And having seen too what I saw, be bold
And next encounter what I do behold
(That's sure) but bid you take on trust!

Attack

The use and purpose of such sights?
Alack,

Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
On Salinguerras praise in preference

To the Sordellos: men of action, these!
Who, seeing just as little as you please,

Yet turn that little to account,—engage
With, do not gaze at,—carry on, a stage,
The work o' the world, not merely make
report

The work existed ere their day! In
short,

When at some future no-time a brave
band

Sees, using what it sees, then shake my
hand

In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile
where's the hurt

Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,
At whose defection mortals stare aghast
As though heaven's bounteous windows
were slammed fast

Incontinent? whereas all you, beneath,
Should scowl at, curse them, bruise lips,
break their teeth

Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you:
And therefore have I moulded, made
anew

A Man, and give him to be turned and
tried,

Be angry with or pleased at. On your
side,

Have ye times, places, actors of your
own?

Try them upon Sordello when full-
grown,

And then—ah then! If Hercules first
parched

His foot in Egypt only to be marched
A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
What chance have I? The demigod was
mute

Till, at the altar, where time out of mind
Such guests became oblations, chaplets
twined

His forehead long enough, and he began
Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.
Take not affront, my gentle audience!
whom

No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,
Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet
rend—

That's your kind suffrage, yours, my
patron-friend,

Whose great verse blares unintermittent
on

Like your own trumpeter at Marathon,—
You who, Plataeas and Salamis being
scant,

Put up with Aetna for a stimulant—
And did well, I acknowledged, as he
loomed

Over the midland sea last month,
presumed

Long, lay demolished in the blazing
West

At eve, while towards him tilting
cloudlets prest

Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend,
wear

A crest proud as desert while I declare
Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring

Tears of its colour from that painted king
Who lost it, I would, for that smile
which went

To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
Sovereign against all passion, wear and
fret!

My English Eyebright, if you are not
glad

That, as I stopped my task awhile, the
sad

Disheveled form, wherein I put man-
kind

To come at times and keep my pact in
mind,

Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the
hedge,

Nor let a glowworm spot the river's
edge

At home, and may the summer showers
gush

Without a warning from the missel
thrush!

So, to our business, now—the fate of such
As find our common nature—overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burthen they impose on it—
Cling when they would discard it ;
craving strength

To leap from the allotted world, at
length

They do leap,—flounder on without a
term,

Each a god's germ, doomed to remain
a germ

In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .

But that's the story—dull enough,
confess !

There might be fitter subjects to allure ;
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint :
What seems a fiend perchance may prove
a saint.

Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,
Then say if you condemn me or acquit.
John the Beloved, banished Antioch
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock
Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
To comfort those his exile most would
grieve,

He knew : a touching spectacle, that
house

In motion to receive him ! Xanthus'
spouse

You missed, made panther's meat a
month since ; but

Xanthus himself (his nephew 'twas, they
shut

'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Poly-
carp,

Soft Charile, next year no wheel could
warp

Tosworn by Caesar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged ; thro' whom the grey
disciple prest,

Busily blessing right and left, just stopt
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman
cropt

Soon after, reached the portal—on its
hinge

The door turns and he enters—what
quick twinge

Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide
eyes fix

Whereon, why like some spectral can-
dlestick's

Branch the disciple's arms ? Dead
swooned he, woke

Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp,
heart-broke,

'Get thee behind me, Satan ! have I
toiled

To no more purpose ? is the gospel
foiled

Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xan-
thus' hearth,

Portrayed with sooty garb and features
swarth—

Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof be-
guiled

To see the—the—the Devil domiciled ?'
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, 'Father, 'tis
yourself

Installed, a limning which our utmost
pelf

Went to procure against to-morrow's
loss ;

And that's no twy-prong, but a pas-
toral cross,

You're painted with !' His puckered
brows unfold—

And you shall hear Sordello's story
told.

BOOK THE FOURTH

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case ;
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their
arms

A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for—one discovering that
to twist

Her tresses twice or thrice about his
wrist

Secured a point of vantage—one, how
best

He'd parry that by planting in her
breast

His elbow-spike—each party too intent
For noticing, how'er the battle went,
The conqueror would but have a corpse
to kiss.

'May Boniface be duly damned for
this !'

—Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he
turned,

From the wet heap of rubbish where
they burned

His house, a little skull with dazzling
teeth :

' A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra
seethe

In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself
Be there to laugh at him ! '—moaned
some young Gueff

Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed
fast

To the charred lintel of the doorway,
last

His father stood within to bid him
speed.

The thoroughfares were overrun with
weed

—Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows
no man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air
again,

And ask the purpose of a sumptuous train
Admitted on a morning ; every town

Of the East League was come by envoy
down

To treat for Richard's ransom : here
you saw

The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross

On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the
fosse

Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy

In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long
ago

To mend the ramparts—sure the lag-
gards know

The Pope's as good as here ! They
paced the streets

More soberly. At last, ' Taurello greets
The League,' announced a pursuivant,—

' will match
Its courtesy, and labours to dispatch

At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor,
sent

On pressing matters from his post at
Trent,

With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply
waits

Their going to receive the delegates.'
' Tito ! ' Our delegates exchanged a

glance,
And, keeping the main way, admired
askance

The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of
earth—

Arbalist, manganel, and catapult ;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers. ' This,
at least,

Were better spared ; he scarce presumes
gainsay

The League's decision ! Get our friend
away

And profit for the future : how else
teach

Fools 'tis not safe to stray within claw's
reach

Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown ?
Those mere convulsive scratches find

the bone.
Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's
nare ? '

The carrochs halted in the public
square.

Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
Men prattled, freelier that the crested

gaunt
White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her
beak

Was missing, and whoever chose might
speak

Ecelin boldly out : so,—' Ecelin
Needed his wife to swallow half the sin

And sickens by himself : the devil's
whelp,

He styles his son, dwindles away, no help
From conserves, your fine triple-curved

froth
Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-
broth—

Eh ? Jubilate ! Peace ! no little word
You utter here that's not distinctly

heard
Up at Oliero : he was absent sick

When we besieged Bassano—who, i' the
thick

O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo
made,

Like Ecelin, through his witch Ade-
laide ?

She managed it so well that, night by
night,

At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-
sprite

First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,
 And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swoond,
 They knew the place was taken.
 Ominous
 That Ghibellins should get what cautious
 Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench
 Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench
 O' the marshes, an impermeable bar.
 Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar
 Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
 His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion.
 What now? The founts! God's bread,
 touch not a plank!
 A crawling hell of carrion — every tank
 Choke full! — found out just now to Cino's cost —
 The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
 And, making no account of fortune's freaks,
 Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks
 Back now with Concorezzi — 'faith! they drag
 Their carroch to San Vital, plant the flag
 On his own palace so adroitly razed
 He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
 And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air —
 Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care —
 Seats himself on the tank's edge — will begin
 To hum, *za, za, Cavalier Ecelin* —
 A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
 Now both feet plough the ground,
 deeper each time,
 At last, *za, za*, and up with a fierce kick
 Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick
 Grey hair about his spur!'
 Which means, they lift
 The covering, Salinguerra, made a shift

To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid
 Further disclosures; leave them thus employed.
 Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
 And poor Feirara puts a softened face
 On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short,
 — Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
 The fig-tree reared itself, — but stark and cramped,
 Made fools of, like tamed lions; whence, on the edge,
 Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge
 Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
 Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof
 Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
 Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
 Born upon three uneasy leopard's heads,
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt
 Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
 With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
 Your path along a wondrous avenue
 Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,
 With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown
 From many a Moorish summer: how they wind
 Out of the fissures! likelier to bind
 The building than those rusted cramps which drop
 Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,
 You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride
 Or else despair of the whole country-side —

A range of statues, swarming o'er with
wasps,
God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek
rough-rasps
In crumbling Naples marble! meant to
look
Like those Messina marbles Constance
took
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,
A certain font with caryatides
Since cloistered at Goito; only, these
Are up and doing, not abashed, a
troop
Able to right themselves—who see you,
stoop
O' the instant after you their arms!
Unplucked
By this or that, you pass, for they conduct
To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
Creatures of brighter mould and braver
mien
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-
while,
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter
stood
For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous
blood
Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
Those shading fingers in their iron
sheath,
Steadied his strengths amid the buz and
stir
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
At the announcement of his over-match
To wind the day's diversion up, dis-
patch
The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs
one heap,
The Slave, no breath in her round
mouth, watched leap
Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
Clove dizzily the solid of the war
—Let coil about his knees for pride in
him.
We reach the farthest terrace, and the
grim
San Pietro Palace stops us.
Such the state
Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate

Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
Retrude still might lead her ancient life
In her new home—whereat enlarged so
much
Neighbours upon the novel princely
touch
He took,—who here imprisons Boniface.
Here must the Envoys come to sue for
grace;
And here, emerging from the labyrinth
Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
Of the door-pillar.
He had really left
Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
From the morass) where Este's camp
was made;
The Envoys' march, the Legate's caval-
cade—
All had been seen by him, but scarce as
when,
Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
At every point save the fantastic tie
Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,
He made account of such. A crowd,—
he meant
To task the whole of it; each part's
intent
Concerned him therefore: and, the
more he pried,
The less became Sordello satisfied
With his own figure at the moment.
Sought
He respite from his task? desried he
aught
Novel in the anticipated sight
Of all these livers upon all delight?
This phalanx, as of myriad points com-
bined,
Whereby he still had imaged that man-
kind
His youth was passed in dreams of
rivalling,
His age—in plans to prove at least such
thing
Had been so dreamed,—which now he
must impress
With his own will, effect a happiness
By theirs,—supply a body to his soul
Thence, and become eventually whole
With them as he had hoped to be with-
out—
Made these the mankind he once raved
about?

Because a few of them were notable,
Should all be figured worthy note? As
well

Expect to find Taurello's triple line
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
Real pines rose here and there; but,
close among,

Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a
throng

Of shrubs, he saw,—a nameless common
sort

O'erpast in dreams, left out of the
report

And hurried into corners, or at best
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.

Reckon that morning's proper chiefs—
how few!

And yet the people grew, the people
grew,

Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
More left behind and most who should
succeed,—

Simply in virtue of their mouths and
eyes,

Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,—
Mingled with, and made veritably great
Those chiefs: he overlooked not

Mainard's state
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be
head

Of infinite and absent Tyrolese
Or Paduans; startling all the more,
that these

Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared
for,

'Yet doubtless on the whole' (quoth
Eglamor)

'Smiling—for, if a wealthy man decays
And out of store of robes must wear, all
days,

One tattered suit, alike in sun and
shade,

'Tis commonly some tarnished gay
brocade

Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no
more:

Nor otherwise poor Misery from her
store

Of looks is fain to upgather, keep
unfurled

For common wear as she goes through
the world,

The faint remainder of some worn-out
smile

Meant for a feast-night's service merely.'
While

Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello
thus,—

(Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
Much less dispute, life's joys with one
employed

In envying them,—or, if they aught
enjoyed,

Where lingered something indefinable
In every look and tone, the mirth as well

As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
Of the result, their good or bad estate)—

Old memories returned with new effect:
And the new body, ere he could suspect,

Cohered, mankind and he were really
fused,

The new self seemed impatient to be used
By him, but utterly another way

To that anticipated: strange to say,
They were too much below him, more
in thrall

Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
What bootied scattered units?—here a
mind

And there, which might repay his own
to find,

And stamp, and use?—a few, howe'er
august,

If all the rest were groveling in the dust?
No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,

Should he establish, privilege procure
For all, the few had long possessed! he
felt

An error, an exceeding error melt—
While he was occupied with Mantuan
chants,

Behoved him think of men, and take
their wants,

Such as he now distinguished every side,
As his own want which might be satis-
fied,—

And, after that, think of rare qualities
Of his own soul demanding exercise.

It followed naturally, through no claim
On their part, which made virtue of the
aim

At serving them, on his,—that, past
retrieve,

He felt now in their toils, theirs—nor
could leave

Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
Impress his will on mankind, he (the
fool !)

Had never even entertained the thought
That this his last arrangement might be
fraught

With incidental good to them as well,
And that mankind's delight would help
to swell

His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
Because the merry time of life must fleet,
'Twas deeper now,—for could the
crowds repeat

Their poor experiences ? His hand that
shook

Was twice to be deplored. 'The
Legate, look !

With eyes, like fresh-blown thrush-eggs
on a thread,

Faint-blue and loosely floating in his
head,

Large tongue, moist open mouth ; and
this long while

That owner of the idiotic smile
Serves them !' He fortunately saw in
time

His fault however, and since the office
prime

Includes the secondary—best adept
Both offices ; Taurello, its adept,

• Could teach him the preparatory one,
And how to do what he had fancied done
Long previously, ere take the greater
task.

How render first these people happy ?
ask

The people's friends : for there must be
one good,

One way to it—the Cause !—he under-
stood

The meaning now of Palma ; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's
hope

And Rome's despair ?—'twixt Emperor
and Pope

The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—
Still hardihood recurring, still to fail—

That foreign interloping fiend, this free
And native overbrooding deity—

Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms
The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the
calms

Of Paradise—or, on the other hand,
The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,
One snake-like cursed of God to love the
ground,

Whose heavy length breaks in the noon
profound

Some saving tree—which needs the
Kaiser, drest

As the dislodging angel of that pest,
Then—yet that pest bedropt, flat head,
full fold,

With coruscating dower of dyes.
'Behold

The secret, so to speak, and master-
spring

Of the contest ! which of the two
Powers shall bring

Men good—perchance the most good—
ay, it may

Be that ! the question, which best
knows the way.

And hereupon Count Mainard strutted
past

Out of San Pietro ; never seemed the
last

Of archers, slingers : and our friend
began

To recollect strange modes of serving
man—

Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,
And more. 'This way of theirs may,—

who can tell ?—
Need perfecting,' said he : 'let all be
solved

At once ! Taurello 'tis, the task devolved
On late—confront Taurello !'

And at last
He did confront him. Scarcely an hour

past

When forth Sordello came, older by
years

Than at his entry. Unexampl'd fears
Oppressed him, and he staggered off,

blind, mute

And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated
brute,

Into Ferrara—not the empty town
That morning witnessed : he went up

and down
Streets whence the veil had been stripped
shred by shred,

So that, in place of huddling with their
dead

Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
 Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit
 like friends
 With any one. A woman gave him
 choice
 Of her two daughters, the infantile
 voice
 Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain,
 his throat
 Was clasped with; but an archer knew
 the coat—
 Its blue cross and eight lilies,—bade
 beware
 One dogging him in concert with the
 pair
 Though thrumming ~~on~~ the sleeve that
 hid his knife.
 Night set in early, autumn dews were
 rife,
 They kindled great fires while the
 Leaguer's mass
 Began at every carroch—he must pass
 Between the kneeling people. Presently
 The carroch of Verona caught his eye
 With purple trappings; silently he
 bent
 Over its fire, when voices violent
 Began, 'Affirm not whom the youth
 was like
 That, striking from the porch, I did not
 strike
 Again; I too have chestnut hair; my
 kin
 Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.
 Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts
 away! sing! take
 My glove for guerdon!' and for that
 man's sake
 He turned: 'A song of Eglamor's!'
 scarce named,
 When, 'Our Sordello's, rather!' all
 exclaimed;
 'Is not Sordello famous est for rhyme?'
 He had been happy to deny, this time,—
 Profess as heretofore the aching head
 And failing heart,—suspect that in his
 stead
 Some true Apollo had the charge of
 them,
 Was champion to reward or to condemn,
 So his intolerable risk might shift
 Or share itself; but Naddo's precious
 gift

Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the
 close—
 'I made that,' said he to a youth who
 rose
 As if to hear: 'twas Palma through the
 band
 Conducted him in silence by her hand.
 Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of
 Trent
 Gave place to Palma and her friend;
 who went
 In turn at Montelungo's visit—one
 After the other were they come and
 gone,—
 These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the
 Pope,
 This incarnation of the People's hope,
 Sordello,—all the say of each was said,
 And Salinguerra sat, himself instead
 Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
 'Twas a drear vast presence-chamber
 roughly set
 In order for the morning's use; full
 face,
 The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had
 first place,
 The crowned grim twy-necked eagle,
 coarsely blacked
 With ~~chre~~ on the naked wall; nor
 lacked
 Romano's green and yellow either side;
 But the new token Tito brought had
 tried
 The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma
 knew
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do
 Until the sight of her restored his lip
 A certain half-smile, three months' chiet-
 tainship
 Had banished! Afterward, the Legate
 found
 No change in him, nor asked what badge
 he wound
 And unwound carelessly. Now sat the
 Chief
 Silent as when our couple left, whose
 brieff
 Encounter wrought so opportune effect
 In thoughts he summoned not, nor would
 reject.
 Though time 'twas now if ever, to pause
 —fix
 On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks

Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy
 town,
 Just managed to be hindered crashing
 down—
 His last, sound troops ranged—care
 observed to post
 His best of the maimed soldiers inner-
 most—
 So much was plain enough, but some-
 how struck
 Him not before. And now with this
 strange luck
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
 So well, what thought he of?—how the
 success
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would
 either hush
 Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly
 flush
 To his young son's white cheek, or, last,
 exempt
 Himself from telling what there was to
 tempt?
 No: that this minstrel was Romano's
 last
 Servant—himself the first! Could he
 contrast
 The whole! that minstrel's thirty years
 just spent
 In doing nought, their notablest event
 This morning's journey hither, as I told—
 Wk> yet was lean, outworn and really
 old,
 A stammering awkward man that scarce
 dared raise
 His eye before the magisterial gaze—
 And Salinguerra with his fears and
 hopes
 Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,
 Cares and contrivances, yet, you would
 say,
 'Twas a youth nonchalantly looked
 away
 Through the embrasure northward o'er
 the sick
 Expostulating trees—so agile, quick
 And graceful turned the head on the
 broad chest
 Encased in pliant steel, his constant
 vest,
 Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire
 Across the room; and, loosened of its
 tire

Of steel, that head let breathe the
 comely brown
 Large massive locks discoloured as if
 a crown
 Encircled them, so frayed the basnet
 where
 A sharp white line divided clean the
 hair;
 Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
 Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
 Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and
 sound:
 This was the mystic mark the Tuscan
 found,
 Mused of, turned over books about.
 Square-faced,
 No lion more; two vivid eyes, enchased
 In hollows filled with many a shade and
 streak
 Settling from the bold nose and bearded
 cheek;
 Nor might the half-smile reach them
 that deformed
 A lip supremely perfect else—un-
 warmed,
 Unwidened, less or more; indifferent
 Whether on trees or men his thoughts
 were bent,
 Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and
 train
 As now a period was fulfilled again;
 Of such, a series made his life, com-
 pressed
 In each, one story serving for the rest—
 How his life-streams rolling arrived at
 last
 At the barrier, whence, were it once
 overpast,
 They would emerge, a river to the end,—
 Gathered themselves up, paused, bade
 fate befriend,
 Took the leap, hung a minute at the
 height,
 Then fell back to oblivion infinite:
 Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched
 garden-grounds
 Where late the adversary, breaking
 bounds,
 Had gained him an occasion, That
 above,
 That eagle, testified he could improve
 Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay
 Beside his rescript, a new badge by way

Of baldric ; while,—another thing that
marred

Alike emprise, achievement and re-
ward,—

Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.

What past life did those flying
thoughts pursue ?

As his, few names in Mantua half so old ;

But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled
It latterly, the Adelardi spared

No pains to rival them : both factions
shared

Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould
yield

A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and
Guef,

As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi)—never tried
His fortune there : with Marchesalla's
child

Would pass,—could Blacks and Whites
be reconciled

And young Taurello wed Linguetta,—
wealth

And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats
by stealth

Already : when the Guelfs, the Raven-
nese

Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone ! Men's first
dismay

Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay
The after indignation, Boniface.

This Richard's father. ' Learn the full
disgrace

Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who
rate

Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate
That might have been, 'mongst Este's
valvassors—

Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors
Our step—but we were zealous.' Azzo's
then

To do with ! Straight a meeting of old
men :

' Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy.

What if we change our ruler and decoy
The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere,

With Italy to build in, fix him here,

Settle the city's troubles in a trice ?

For private wrong, let public good suffice !'

In fine, young Salinguerra's stanchest
friends

Talked of the townsmen making him
amends.

Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed
there was

Rare sport, one morning, over the green
grass

A mile or so. He sauntered through
the plain.

Was restless, fell to thinking, turned
again

In time for Azzo's entry with the bride ;
Count Boniface rode smirking at their
side :

' She brings him half Ferrara,' whispers
flew,

' And all Ancona ! If the stripling knew !'

Anon the stripling was in Sicily

Where Heinrich ruled in right of Con-
stance ; he

Was gracious nor his guest incapable :
Each understood the other. So it fell.

One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at
ease,

Had near forgotten by what precise
degrees

He ~~crept~~ at first to such a downy seat.

The Count trudged over in a special heat
To bid him of God's love dislodge from
each

Of Salinguerra's palaces,—a breach

Might yawn else, not so readily to
shut,

For who was just arrived at Mantua but
The youngster, sword on thigh, and tuft
on chin,

With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,
Pistore and the like ! Next news,—no
whit

Do any of Ferrara's domes befit
His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a
band

Of foreigners assemble, understand
Garden-constructing, level and surround.

Build up and bury in. A last news
crowned

The consternation : since his infant's
birth.

He only waits they end his wondrous
girth

Of trees that link San Pietro with Tomà,
To visit Mantua. When the Podestà

Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend
Taurello thither, what could be their end
But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,
The Kaiser helping? He with most to
dread

From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there
With Boniface beforehand, as aware
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled

Both plotters: but the Guelfs in
triumph yelled

Too hastily. The burning and the
flight,

And how Taurello, occupied that night
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told:
—Not how he bore the blow, retained
his hold,

Got friends safe through, left enemies the
worst

O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care
at first—

But afterward men heard not constantly
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!
Though Azzo simply gained by the event
A shifting of his plagues—the first, content

To fall behind the second and estrange
So far his nature, suffer such a change
That in Romano sought he wife and
child,

And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled

To losing individual life, which shrunk
As the other prospered—mortised in his
trunk;

Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs
foil

Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,

Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the
root,

And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
Once Adelaide set on,—the subtle mate
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
The Church's valiant women deed for
deed,

And paragon her namesake, win the
meed

Of the great Matilda,—soon they over-
bore

The rest of Lombardy,—not as before

By an instinctive truculence, but patched
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel
means.

'Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
Himself behind Romano?—him we bade
Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek
the shade!'

—Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the
tardiest

To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
At once in the arrangement; reasoned,
plied

His friend with offers of another bride,
A statelier function—fruitlessly: 'twas
plain

Taurello through some weakness must
remain

Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of
both,

—Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,
And this more plausible and facile wight
With every point a-sparkle—chose the
right,

Admiring how his predecessors harped
On the wrong man: 'thus,' quoth he,
'wits are warped

By outsides!' Carelessly, meanwhile,
his life

Suffered its many turns of peace and
strife

In many lands—you hardly could sur-
prise

The man;—who shamed Sordello
(recognize!)

In this as much beside, that, uncon-
cerned

What qualities were natural or earned,
With no ideal of graces, as they came
He took them, singularly well the
same—

Speaking the Greek's own language, just
because

Your Greek eludes you, leave the least
of flaws

In contracts with him; while, since
Arab lore

Holds the stars' secret—take one trouble
more

And master it! 'Tis done, and now
deter

Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined
for her,

From Friedrich's path!—Friedrich,
 whose pilgrimage
 The same man puts aside, whom he'll
 engage
 To leave next year John Brienne in the
 lurch,
 Come to Bassano, see Saint Francis'
 church
 And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
 Which, lend Taurello credit, rivals
 Greece—
 Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits
 Pitched home, applauding Ecclin's
 exploits.
 For elegance, he strung the angelot,
 Made rhymes thereto, for prowess,
 clove he not
 Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper
 Why
 Detail you thus a varied mastery
 But to show how Taurello, on the watch
 For men, to read their hearts and thereby
 catch
 Their capabilities and purposes,
 Displayed himself so far as displayed
 these :
 While our Sordello only cared to know
 About men as a means whereby he'd
 show
 Himself, and men had much or little
 worth
 According as they kept in or drew forth
 That self; Taurello's choicest instru-
 ments
 Surmised him shallow.
 Meantime, malcontents
 Dropped off, town after town grew wiser.
 'How
 Change the world's face?' asked people;
 'as 'tis now
 It has been, will be ever: very fine
 Subjecting things profane to things
 divine,
 In talk! this contumacy will fatigue
 The vigilance of Este and the League!
 The Ghibellins gain on us!'—as it
 happened.
 Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped
 By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space
 Slept at Verona: either left a brace
 Of sons—but, three years after, either's
 pair
 Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:

Azzo remained and Richard—all the
 stay
 Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay
 As 'twere. Then, either Ecclin grew
 old
 Or his brain altered—not of the proper
 mould
 For new appliances—his old palm-stock
 Endured no influx of strange strengths.
 He'd rock
 As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
 As proud of the completeness of his woe,
 Then weep real tears;—now make some
 mad onslaught
 On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
 So painfully,—now cringe for peace, sue
 peace
 At price of past gain,—much more, fresh
 increase
 To the fortunes of Romano. Up at
 last
 Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.
 And men remarked these freaks of peace
 and war
 Happened while Salinguerra was afar:
 Whence every friend besought him, all
 in vain,
 To use his old adherent's wits again.
 Not he!—'who had advisers in his
 sons,
 Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
 Advice.' 'Twas Adelaide's remaining
 stance
 Prevented his destruction root and
 branch
 Forthwith; but when she died, doom
 fell, for gay
 He made alliances, gave lands away
 To whom it pleased accept them, and
 withdrew
 For ever from the world. Taurello, who
 Was summoned to the convent, then
 refused
 A word at the wicket, patience thus
 abused,
 Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
 Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish
 smile.
 Soon a few movements of the happier sort
 Changed matters, put himself in men's
 report
 As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,
 And that became him ever. So, in pride

And flushing of this kind of second youth,
 He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
 Lay prone—and men remembered, somewhat late,
 A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
 He bore to Este—how it would out-break
 At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake
 In sunny weather—as that noted day
 When with his hundred friends he tried to slay
 Azzo before the Kaiser's face : and how,
 On Azzo's calm refusal to allow
 A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed :
 As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,
 Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive
 All intermediate crumbling, and arrive
 At earth's catastrophe—twas Este's crash
 Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
 Procedure ! Este's true antagonist
 Rose out of Ecelin : all voices whist,
 All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted.
 He
 'Twas, leaned in the embrasure absently,
 Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
 With his steel-sheathed forefinger
 Friedrich's face
 I' the dust : but as the trees waved serene,
 his smile
 Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.
 'Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer ?
 That we should stick together, all the year.
 I kept Verona !—How old Boniface,
 Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,
 He by that pillar, I at this.—caught each
 In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,
 Egging the rabble on to disavow
 Allegiance to their Marquis—Bacchus,
 how
 They boasted ! Ecelin must turn their drudge,
 Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge

Paying arrears of tribute due long since—
 Bacchus ! My man, could promise then, nor wince,
 The bones-and-muscles ! sound of wind and limb,
 Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him :
 And now he sits me, slaving and mute,
 Intent on chafing each starved purple foot
 Benumbed past aching with the altar slab—
 Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab
 Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,
 "Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps"
 —Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet ?
 Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,
 God's own now ? Dropthe dormitory bar,
 Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular
 Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out—
 So ! but the midnight whisper turns a shout,
 Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate
 In the stone walls : the Past, the world you hate
 Is with you, ambush, open field—or see
 The surging flame—we fire Vicenza—glee !
 Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe—
 Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio—safe !
 Ah, the mad people waken ? Ah, they writhe
 And reach us ? if they block the gate—no tithe
 Can pass—keep back, you Bassanese ! the edge,
 Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge,
 Let out the black of those black upturned eyes !
 Hell—are they sprinkling fire too ? the blood fries
 And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear
 Those upturned faces choking with despair.

Brave! Slidder through the reeking
gate—"how now?"
You six had charge of her?" And then
the vow
Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's
plucked, till one shriek
(I hear it) and you fling—you cannot
speak—
Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who
haled
The Adelaide he dared scarce view un-
veiled
This morn, naked across the fire: how
crown
The archer that exhausted lays you
down
Your infant, smiling at the flame, and
dies?
While one, while mine . . .
Bacchus! I think there lies
More than one corpse there' (and he
paced the room)
'—Another cinder somewhere—'twas
my doom
Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead
I am the same, this Azzo lives instead
Of that to me, and we pull, any how,
Este into a heap—the matter's now
At the true juncture slipping us so oft.
Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you,
dofted
His crown at such a juncture! still, if hold
Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain
enfold
The neck of . . . who but this same
Ecelin
That must recoil when the best days
begin!
Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler
leaves
His name for me to fight with, no one
grieves!
But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock
His cloister to become my stumbling-
block
Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 'tis again—
The land's inevitable Head—explain
The reverences that subject us! Count
These Ecelins now! not to say as fount,
Originating power of thought,—from
twelve
That drop i' the trenches they joined
hands to delve,

Six shall surpass him, but . . . why, men
must twine
Somehow with something! *Ecelin's* a
fine
Clear name! 'Twere simpler, doubtless,
twine with me
At once: our cloistered friend's capacity
Was of a sort! I had to share myself
In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf
That's forced illume in fifty points the
vast
Rare vapour he's environed by. At
last
My strengths, though sorely frittered,
e'en converge
And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have
yet to urge
The man be crowned!
That aloe, an he durst,
Would climb! just such a bloated
sprawler first
I noted in Messina's castle-court
The day I came, when Heinrich asked in
sport
If I would pledge my faith to win him
back
His right in Lombardy: "for, once bid
pack
Marauders," he continued, "in my
stead
You rule, Taurello!" and upon this
head
Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see
her
Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
Retrude following!
I am absolved
From further toil: the empery devolved
On me, 'twas Tito's word: I have to
lay
For once my plan, pursue my plan my
way,
Prompt nobody, and render an account
Taurello to Taurello! nay, I mount
To Friedrich—he conceives the post I
kept,
Who did true service, able or inept,
Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.
Me guerdoned, counsel follows; would
he vie
With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface
Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's
race

Must break ere govern Lombardy.
 I point
 How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint.
 The socket from the bone :—my Azzo's stare
 Meanwhile ! for I, this idle strap to wear,
 Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end
 To serve ? There 's left me twenty years to spend
 —How better than my old way ? Had I one
 Who laboured overthrow my work—a son
 Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
 To root my pines up and then poison me,
 Suppose—'twere worth while frustrate that ! Beside,
 Another life 's ordained me : the world's tide
 Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press
 Of waves, a single wave through weariness
 Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore ?
 My life must be lived out in foam and roar,
 No question. Fifty years the province held
 Taurello ; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
 He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,
 These trees a year or two, then, not a trace
 Of him ! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues
 Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs—
 To which, despite our bustle, he is linked ?
 —Flowers one may tease, that never grow extinct.
 Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where
 I set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,
 To overawe the aloes ; and we trod
 Those flowers, how call you such ?—into the sod ;
 A stately foreigner—a world of pain
 To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—
 all vain !

It would decline ; these would not be destroyed :
 And now, where is it ? where can you avoid
 The flowers ? I frighten children twenty years
 Longer !—which way, too, Ecelin appears
 To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth
 Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth :
 They feel it at Vicenza ! Fate, fate, fate,
 My fine Taurello ! go you, promulgate
 Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandize
 Young Ecelin—your Prefect's badge ! a prize
 Too precious, certainly.
 How now ? Compete
 With my old comrade ? shuffle from their seat
 His children ? Paltry dealing ! Don't I know
 Ecelin ? now, I think, and years ago !
 What's changed—the weakness ? did not I compound
 For that, and undertake to keep him sound
 Despite it ? Here 's Taurello hankering
 After a boy's preferment—this playing thing
 To carry, Bacchus ! ' And he laughed.
 Remark
 Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark
 Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort
 Fail : while these last are ever stopping short—
 (So much they should—so little they can do !)
 The careless tribe see nothing to pursue
 If they desist ; meantime their scheme succeeds
 Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds
 Methodio with Taurello ; so, he turned,
 Enough amused by fancies fairly earned
 Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,
 And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,—
 To his own petty but immediate doubt
 If he could pacify the League without

Conceding Richard ; just to this was
 brought
 That interval of vain discursive thought!
 As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past
 pursuit
 Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot
 Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy
 black
 Enormous watercourse which guides
 him back
 To his own tribe again, where he is king ;
 And laughs because he guesses, num-
 bering
 The yellower poison-wattles on the
 pouch
 Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
 Under the slime (whose skin, the while,
 he strips
 To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,
 And eyeballs bloodshot through the
 desert blast)
 That he has reached its boundary, at last
 May breathe ;—thinkso'erenchantments
 of the South
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their
 mouth,
 Eyes, nails, and hair ; but, these en-
 chantments tried
 In fancy, puts them soberly aside
 For truth, projects a cool return with
 friends,
 The likelihood of winning mere amends
 Ere long ; thinks that, takes comfort
 silently,
 Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs
 and he,
 Hugging revenge close to their hearts,
 are soon
 Off-striding for the Mountains of the
 Moon.
 Midnight : the watcher nodded on
 his spear,
 Since clouds dispersing left a passage
 clear,
 For any meagre and discoloured moon
 To venture forth ; and such was peering
 soon
 Above the harassed city—her close lanes
 (closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
 As though she shrunk into herself to
 keep
 What little life was saved, more safely.
 Heap

By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and
 beside
 The blackest spoke Sordello and replied
 Palma with none to listen. ' 'Tis your
 Cause :
 What makes a Ghibellin ? There should
 be laws—
 (Remember how my youth escaped !
 I trust
 To you for manhood, Palma ; tell me just
 As any child)—there must be laws at
 work
 Explaining this. Assure me, good may
 lurk
 Under the bad,—my multitude has part
 In your designs, their welfare is at heart
 With Salinguerra, to their interest
 Refer the deeds he dwelt on,—so divest
 Our conference of much that scared me.
 Why
 Affect that heartless tone to Tito ? I
 Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost
 mind
 This morn, a recreant to my race—man-
 kind
 O'erlooked till now : why boast my
 spirit's force,
 --Such force denied its object ? why
 divorce
 These, then admire my spirit's flight the
 same
 As though it bore up, helped some half-
 orb'd flame
 Else quenched in the dead void, to
 living space ?
 —That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
 Why vaunt so much my unincumbered
 dance,
 Making a feat's facilities enhance
 Its marvel ? But I front Taurello, one
 Of happier fate, and all I should have
 done,
 He does ; the people's good being para-
 mount
 With him, their progress may perhaps
 account
 For his abiding still : whereas you heard
 The talk with Tito—the excuse pre-
 ferred
 For burning those five hostages,—and
 broached
 By way of blind, as you and I ap-
 proached,

I do believe.'

She spoke: then he, 'My thought
Plainlier expressed! All to your profit—
nought

Meantime of these, of conquests to
achieve

For them, of wretchedness he might
relieve

While profiting your party. Azzo, too,
Supports a cause: what cause? Do
Guelfs pursue

Their ends by means like yours, or
better?'

When
The Guelfs were proved alike, men
weighed with men,

And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with
blood and blaze,

Morn broke: 'Once more, Sordello,
meet its gaze

Proudly—the people's charge against
thee fails

In every point, while either party quails!
These are the busy ones—be silent thou!

Two parties take the world up, and allow
No third, yet have one principle, subsist
By the same injustice; whoso shall
enlist

With either, ranks with man's inveterate
foes.

So there is one less quarrel to compose:
The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to
curse—

I have done nothing, but both sides do
worse

Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten,
reft

Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers,
was left

The notion of a service—ha? What
lured

Me here, what mighty aim was I
assured

Must move Taurello? What if there
remained

A Cause, intact, distinct from these,
ordained,

For me, its true discoverer?'

Some one pressed
Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
The subject for a ballad: 'They must
know

The tale of the dead worthy, long ago

Consul of Rome—that 's long ago for us,
Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling
thus

In the world's corner—but too late, no
doubt,

For the brave time he sought to bring
about.

—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?'
Then

He cast about for terms to tell him,
when

Sordello disavowed it, how they used
Whenever their Superior introduced
A novice to the Brotherhood—('for I
Was just a brown-sleeve brother,
merrily

Appointed too,' quoth he, 'till Innocent
Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
My wife or my brown sleeves')—some
brother spoke

Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
The edict issued, after his demise,
Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
All out except a floating power, a name
Including, tending to produce the same
Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten,
lived at least

Within that brain, though to a vulgar
priest

And a vile stranger,—two not worth
a slave

Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho,—
fortune gave

The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply
drest

In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,
Taking the people at their word, forth
stept

As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
Rome waiting,—stood erect, and from
his brain

Gave Rome out on its ancient place
again,

Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome,
kings styled

Themselves mere citizens of, and, be-
guiled

Into great thoughts thereby, would
choose the gem

Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem
—The Senate's cypher was so hard to
scratch!

He flashes like a phanal, all men catch

The flame, Rome's just accomplished !
 when returned
 Otho, with John, the Consul's step had
 spurned,
 And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
 The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the
 stress
 Of adverse fortune bent. 'They crucified
 Their Consul in the Forum, and abide
 E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I—
 (for I
 Was once a brown-sleeve brother,
 merrily
 Appointed)—I had option to keep wife
 Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in
 the strife
 Lose both. A song of Rome !'
 And Rome, indeed,
 Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
 The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
 Looked an established point of light
 whence rays
 Traversed the world; for, all the
 clustered homes
 Beside of men, seemed bent on being
 Romes
 In their degree; the question was, how
 each
 Should most resemble Rome, clean out
 of reach.
 Nor, of the great Two, either principle,
 Struggled to change—but to possess—
 Rome, still,
 Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.
 Let Rome advance !
 Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignor-
 ance—
 How could he doubt one moment ?
 Rome's the Cause !
 Rome of the Pandects, all the world's
 new laws—
 Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo ;
 New structures, that inordinately glow,
 Subdued, brought back to harmony,
 made ripe
 By many a relic of the archetype
 Extant for wonder; every upstart
 church
 That hoped to leave old temples in the
 lurch,
 Corrected by the Theatre forlorn
 That,—as a mundane shell, its world
 late born,—

Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints
 combined,
 Rome typifies the scheme to put man-
 kind
 Once more in full possession of their
 rights.
 'Let us have Rome again ! On me it
 lights
 To build up Rome—on me, the first and
 last :
 For such a Future was endured the
 Past !'
 And thus, in the grey twilight, forth he
 sprung
 To give his thought consistency among
 The very People—let their facts avail
 Finish the dream grown from the
 archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk
 As at the dawn?—merely a perished
 husk
 Now, that arose a power fit to build
 Up Rome again? The proud conception
 chilled
 So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream
 of thine
 —A Rome indebted to no Palatine,
 Drop arch by arch, Sordello !—Art
 possess
 Of thy wish now—rewarded for thy
 quest
 To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons—
 Are this and this and this the shining
 ones
 Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to
 say,
 Your favoured tenantry pursue their
 way
 After a fashion ! This companion slips
 On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard
 trips
 At his mooned sandal. 'Leave to lead
 the brawls
 Here i' the atria?' No, friend ! He
 that sprawls
 On aught but a stibadium . . . what his
 dues
 Who puts the lustral vase to such an
 use ?

Oh, huddle up the day's disasters!

March,

Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,

Rome!

Yet before they quite disband—
a whim—

Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,

Nay, even the worst,—just house them!

Any cave

Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole?

Brave!

They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass

Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,

And I am dead! But here's our son excools

At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rattlers, dreams and shapes

His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie we both

Perdue another age. The goodly growth
Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt

was rough,

But that descendant's garb suits well enough

A portico-contriver. Speed the years—
What's time to us? at last, a city rears

Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to us?

Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sower, forum, cirque—

Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,
But now they tire the artificer upon

Blank alabaster, black obsidian,

—Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgorant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples

pant

Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference be-

twixt

This Rome and ours—resemblance what,
between

That scurvy dumb-show and this
pageant sheen—

These Romans and our rabble? Use thy
wit!

The work marched: step by step,—a
workman fit

Took each, nor too fit,—to one task,
one time,—

No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft
withe,

To further loam-and-roughcast-work a
stago,—

Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple-log's their
luxury!

That way was Rome built. 'Better'
(say you) 'merge

At once all workmen in the demiurge,
All epochs in a lifetime, every task

In one! So should the sudden city bask
I' the day—while those we'd feast there,
want the knack

Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from
speck and brack,

Distinguish not rare peacock from vile
swan,

Nor Marcotic juice from Coccuban.
'Enough of Rome! 'Twas happy to
conceive

Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave
Me of that credit: for the rest, her
spite

Is an old story—serves my folly right
By adding yet another to the dull

List of abortions—things proved beautiful

Could they be done, Sordello cannot do.'
He sat upon the terrace, plucked and

threw

The powdery aloë-cusps away, saw shift
Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch,

and drift

Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
Mounds of all majesty. 'Thou arch-

type,

Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!'
And then a low voice wound into his

heart:

'Sordello!' (low as some old Pythoness
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error—one mis-

take

Of her past oracle) 'Sordello, wake!
God has conceded two sights to a man—

One, of men's whole work, time's com-

pleted plan,

The other, of the minute's work, man's first
 Step to the plan's completeness :
 what's dispersed
 Save hope of that supreme step which,
 desoried
 Earliest, was meant still to remain
 untried
 Only to give you heart to take your own
 Step, and there stay—leaving the rest
 alone?
 Where is the vanity? Why count as one
 The first step, with the last step?
 What is gone
 Except Rome's acry magnificence,
 That last step you'd take first?—an
 evidence
 You were God: be man now! Let
 those glances fall!
 The basis, the beginning step of all,
 Which proves you just a man—is that
 gone too?
 Pity to disconcert one versed as you
 In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
 Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
 Read the black writing—that collective
 man
 Outstrips the individual! Who began
 The acknowledged greatnesses? Ay,
 your own art
 Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes
 apart—
 Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
 Yet too plain form divides itself from
 him!
 Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
 Woven into the echoes left erewhile
 By Nina, one soft web of song: no
 more
 Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er
 and o'er!
 An elder poet in the younger's place—
 Nina's the strength—but Alcamo's the
 grace:
 Each neutralizes each then! Search
 your fill;
 You get no whole and perfect Poet—still
 New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's mid-
 night
 Shrouds all—or better say, the shutting
 light
 Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
 Every ideal workman—(to reject

In favour of your fearful ignorance
 The thousand phantasms eager to
 advance,
 And point you but to those within your
 reach)—
 Were you the first who brought—(in
 modern speech)
 The Multitude to be materialized?
 That loose eternal unrest—who devised
 An apparition i' the midst? The rout
 Was checked, a breathless ring was
 formed about
 That sudden flower: get round at any
 risk
 The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing
 disk
 O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign
 thy reign
 And serve thy frolic service, Charle-
 magne!
 —The very child of over-joyousness,
 Unfeeling thence, strong therefore:
 Strength by stress
 Of Strength comes of that forehead
 confident,
 Those widened eyes expecting heart's
 content,
 A calm as out of just-quelled noise;
 nor swerves
 For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious
 curves
 Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
 He wills, how should he doubt then?
 Ages slip:
 Was it Sordello pried into the work
 So far accomplished, and discovered lurk
 A company amid the other clans,
 Only distinct in priests for castellans
 And popes for suzerains (their rule con-
 fessed
 Its rule, their interest its interest,
 Living for sake of living—there an
 end,—
 Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
 In making adversaries or allies),—
 Dived you into its capabilities
 And dared create, out of that sect, a soul
 Should turn the multitude, already
 whole,
 Into its body? Speak plainer! Is 't so
 sure
 God's church lives by a King's investi-
 ture?

Look to last step! a staggering—a shock—

What 's mere sand is demolished, while the rock

Endures : a column of black fiery dust
Blots heaven—that help was prematurely thrust

Aside, perchance!—but the air clears,
nought 's erased

Of the true outline! Thus much being
firm based,

The other was a scaffold. See him stand
Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand

Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er
ply

As in a forge ; it buries either eye
White and extinct, that stupid brow ;

teeth clenched,
The neck tight-corded, too, the chin

deep-trenched,
As if a cloud enveloped him while fought

Under its shade, grim prizers, thought
with thought

At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
The victor thought leapt radiant up,

and Will,
The slave with folded arms, and

drooping lids
They fought for, lean forth flame-like as

it bids.
Call him no flower—a mandrake of the

earth,
Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in

its birth,
Rather, a fruit of suffering's excess,

Thence feeling, therefore stronger : still
by stress

Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full
three hundred years

Have men to wear away in smiles and
tears

Between the two that nearly seem to
touch,

Observe you! quit one workman and
you clutch

Another, letting both their trains go by—
The actors-out of either's policy,

Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
Carry the three Imperial crowns across,

Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's
Gold—

While Alexander, Innocent uphold .

On that, each Papal key—but, link on
link,

Why is it neither chain betrays a chink?
How coalesce the small and great?

Alack,
For one thrust forward, fifty such fall
back!

Do the popes coupled there help
Gregory

Alone? Hark—from the hermit Peter's
cry

At Claremont, down to the first serf that
says

Friedrich's no liege of his while he
delays

Getting the Pope's curse off him! The
Crusade—

Or trick of breeding strength by other aid
Than strength, is safe. Hark—from

the wild harangue
Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang

Yonder! The League—or trick of
turning strength

Against pernicious strength, is safe at
length.

Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert
making cease

The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preach-
ing peace

Yonder! God's Truce—or trick to
supersede

The very use of strength, is safe. Indeed
We trench upon the Future! Who is

found
To take next step, next age—trail o'er

the ground—
Shall I say, gourd-like?—not the

flower's display
Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous

way
O' the plant—produced by joy and
sorrow, whence

Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest
thence?

Knowledge by stress of merely Know-
ledge? No—

E'en were Sordello ready to forego
His life for this, 'twere overleaping work

Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,
Nor stray a foot's breadth from the

beaten road.
Who means to help must still support the

load

Hildebrand lifted—"why hast Thou,"
 he groaned,
 "Imposed on me a burthen, Paul had
 moaned,
 And Moses dropped beneath?" Much
 done—and yet
 Doubtless, that grandest task God ever
 set
 On man, left much to do: at his arm's
 wrench,
 Charlemagne's scaffold fell: but pillars
 blench
 Merely, start back again—perchance
 have been
 Taken for buttresses: crash every
 screen,
 Hammer the tenons better, and engage
 A gang about your work, for the next
 age
 Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength
 and part
 By Knowledge! Then, indeed, per-
 chance may start
 Sordello on his race—would timedivulge
 Such secrets! If one step's awry, one
 bulge
 Calls for correction by a step we thought
 Got over long since, why, till that is
 wrought,
 No progress! and the scaffold in its
 turn
 Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to
 spurn.
 Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of
 life
 In store, dispose you to forego the strife,
 Who takes exception? Only bear in
 mind,
 Ferrara's reached, Goito's left behind:
 As you then were, as half yourself,
 desist!
 —The warrior-part of you may, an it
 list,
 Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
 Fling them afar and taste the cream of
 joys
 By wielding such in fancy,—what is
 bard
 Of you, may spurn the vehicle that
 marred
 Elys so much, and in free fancy glut
 His sense, yet write no verses—you have
 but

To please yourself for law, and once
 could please
 What once appeared yourself, by
 dreaming these
 Rather than doing these, in days gone
 by.
 But all is changed the moment you
 descry
 Mankind as half yourself,—then, fancy's
 trade
 Ends once and always: how may half
 evade
 The other half? men are found half of
 you.
 Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
 Can be accomplished presently: but
 flinch
 From these (as from the faulchion,
 raised an inch,
 Elys, described a couplet) and make
 proof
 Of fancy,—then, while one half lolls
 aloof
 I' the vines, completing Rome to the
 tip-top—
 See if, for that, your other half will
 stop
 A tear, begin a smile! The rabble's
 woes,
 Ludicrous in their patience as they
 chose
 To sit about their town and quietly
 Be slaughtered,—the poor reckless
 soldiery,
 With their ignoble rhymes on Richard,
 how
 "Pol-foot," sang they, "was in a pit-
 fall now,"
 Cheering each other from the engine-
 mounts,—
 That crippled spawling idiot who re-
 counts
 How, lopt of limbs, he lay, stupid as
 stone,
 Till the pains crept from out him one by
 one,
 And wriggles round the arothers on his
 head
 To earn a morsel of their chestnut
 bread,—
 And Cino, always in the self-same place
 Weeping; beside that other wretch's
 case,

Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he
 plied
 The engine in his coat of raw sheep's
 hido
 A double watch in the noon sun; and
 see
 Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free,
 Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and
 scented hair,
 Campaigning it for the first time—cut
 there
 In two already, boy enough to crawl
 For latter orpine round the southern
 wall,
 Tomà, where Richard's kept, because
 that whore
 Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
 Sickened for flowers this wearisomest
 siege:
 And Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty
 liege,
 Cared for her least of whims once,—
 Berta, wed
 A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor
 Tiso's dead,
 Delivering herself of his first child
 On that chance heap of wet filth, recon-
 ciled
 To fifty gazers! '—(Here a wind' below
 Made moody music augural of woe
 From the pine barrier)—'What if, now
 the scene
 Draws to a close, yourself have really
 been
 —You, plucking purples in Goito's
 moss
 Like edges of a trabea (not to cross
 Your consul-humour) or dry aloe-shafts
 For fasces, at Ferrara—he, fate wafts,
 This very age, her whole inheritance
 Of opportunities? Yet you advance
 Upon the last! Since talking is your
 trade,
 There's Salinguerra left you to per-
 suade:
 Fail! then '—
 'No—no—which latest
 chance secure!'
 Leapt up and cried Sordello: 'this
 made sure,
 The Past were yet redeemable; its work
 Was—help the Guelfs, whom I, how'er
 it irk,

Thus help!' (He shook the foolish aloe-
 haulm
 Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded
 calm
 To the appointed presence. The large
 head
 Turned on its socket; 'And your
 spokesman,' said
 The large voice, 'is Elcorte's happy
 sprout?
 Few such'—(so finishing a speech no
 doubt
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
 —'My sober councils have diversified,
 Elcorte's son! good: forward as you
 may,
 Our lady's minstrel with so much to
 say!'
 The hesitating sunset floated back,
 Rosily traversed in the wonted track
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the
 girth
 Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in
 earth
 Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to
 crest,
 That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
 Palma's contour; 'twas Day looped
 back Night's pall;
 Sordello had a chance left spite of all.
 And much he made of the convincing
 speech
 He meant should compensate the Past
 and reach
 Through his youth's daybreak of un-
 profit, quite
 To his noon's labour, so proceed till
 night
 Leisurely! The great argument to
 bind
 Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and
 mind,
 —Came the consummate rhetoric to
 that?
 Yet most Sordello's argument dropped
 flat
 Through his accustomed fault of break-
 ing yoke,
 Disjoining him who felt from him who
 spoke.
 Was't not a touching incident—so
 prompt
 A rendering the world its just accompt,

Once proved its debtor ? Who'd suppose, before

This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
At duty's instance could demean himself
So memorably, dwindle to a Gueff ?
Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
His inmost self at the out-portion
peeped

Thus occupied ; then stole a glance at those

Appealed to, curious if her colour rose
Or his lip moved, while he discreetly
urged

The need of Lombardy's becoming
purged

At soonest of her barons ; the poor part
Abandoned thus, missing the blood at
heart

And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
Elsewhere ! But, though his speech was
worthy scoff.

Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for
tact

And tongue, who, careless of his phrase,
ne'er lacked

The right phrase, and harangued
Honorius dumb

At his accession,—looked as all fell
plumb

To purpose and himself found interest
In every point his new instructor
pressed

—Left playing with the rescript's white
wax seal

To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.
Then means he yield assent sure ? No,
alas !

All he replied was, ' What, it comes to
pass

That poesy, sooner than politics,
Makes fado young hair ? ' To think such
speech could fix

Taurcllo !

Then a flash of bitter truth :
So fantasies could break and fritter
youth

That he had long ago lost earnestness,
Lost will to work, lost power to even
express

The need of working ! Earth was turned
a grave :

No more occasions now, though he
should crave

Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
To do what was undone, repair such spoil,
Alter the Past—nothing would give the
chance !

Not that he was to die : he saw askance
Protract the ignominious years beyond
To dream in—time to hope and time
despond,

Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice
As saved a trouble ; he might, at his
choice,

One way or other, idle life out, drop
No few smooth verses by the way—for
prop,

A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,
Should pick up, and set store by,—far
from blame,

Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his
better part

Survived him. ' Rather tear men out
the heart

Of the truth ! '—Sordello muttered, and
renewed

His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack
Had thrown great breast and ruffling
corslet back

To hear the better, smilingly resumed
His task ; beneath, the carroch's
warning boomed ;

He must decide with Tito ; courteously
He turned then, even seeming to agree
With his admonisher—' Assist the Pope,
Extend Gueff domination, fill the scope
Of the Church, thus based on All, by All,
for All—

Change Secular to Evangelical '—
Echoing his very sentence : all seemed
lost,

When sudden he looked up, laughingly
almost,

To Palma : ' This opinion of your
friend's—

For instance, would it answer Palma's
ends ?

Best, were it not, turn Gueff, submit our
Strength ;—

(Here he drew out his baldric to its
length)

—' To the Pope's Knowledge—let our
captive slip,

Wide to the walls throw ope our gates,
equip

Azzo with . . . what I hold here? Who'll
subscribe

To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe
Henceforward? or pronounce, as Hein-
rich used,

"Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for
the joust!"

—When Constance, for his couplets,
would promote

Alcamo, from a parti-coloured coat,
To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.
Not that I see where couplet-making
jars

With common sense: at Mantua I had
borne

This chanted, better than their most
forlorn

Of bull-baits,—that's indisputable!

Brave!

Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall
save!

All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their
friends or foes?

A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some
special link?

Abrupt the visionary tether burst—
What were rewarded here, or what
amerced

If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and
head

Of—'Men of Action,' as the Jongleurs
said,

—'The Great Men,' in the people's
dialect?

And not a moment did this scorn
affect

Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,
Asking 'what was,' obtained a full
response.

Bid Naddo think at Mantua, he had but
To look into his promptuary, put
Finger on a set thought in a set speech:
But was Sordello fitted thus for each
Conjecture? Nowise; since, within his
soul,

Perception brooded unexpressed and
whole.

A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
Craves aliment in plenty—all the same,
Changes, assimilates its aliment.

Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?

Next day no formularies more you saw
Than figs or olives in a sated maw.

'Tis Knowledge, whither such percep-
tions tend;

They lose themselves in that, means to
an end,

The many old producing some one new,
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass
receives

A meal, munched millet grains and
lettuce leaves

Together in his stomach rattle loose—

You find them perfect next day to
produce;

But ne'er expect the man, on strength of
that,

Can roll an iron camel-collar flat
Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what
was stored

Bit by bit through Sordello's life, out-
poured

That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:
And round those three the people formed
a ring,

Of visionary judges whose award
He recognized in full—faces that barred
Henceforth return to the old careless
life,

In whose great presence, therefore, his
first strife

For theirsake must not beignobly fought.

All these, for once, approved of him, he
thought,

Suspended their own vengeance, chose
await

The issue of this strife to reinstate
Them in the right of taking it—in fact
He must be proved king ere they could
exact

Vengeance for such king's defalcation.
Last,

A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
Was in his quite forgetting for a time
Himself in his amazement that the
rhyme

Disguised the royalty so much: he
there—

And Salinguerra—and yet unaware

Who was the lord, who liegeman !
 ' Thus I lay
 On thine my spirit and compel obey
 His lord,—my liegeman,—impotent to
 build
 Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
 In what such builder should have been,
 as brook
 One shame beyond the charge that I
 forsook
 His function ! Free me from that shame,
 I bend
 A brow before, suppose new years to
 spend,
 Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly,
 recur—
 Measure thee with the Minstrel, then,
 demur
 At any crown he claims ! That I must
 cede
 Shamed now, my right to my especial
 meed—
 Confess thee fitter help the world than I
 Ordained its champion from eternity,
 Is much : but to behold thee scorn the
 post
 I quit in thy behalf—to hear thee boast
 What makes my own despair ! ' And
 while he rung
 The changes on this theme, the roof up-
 sprung,
 The sad walls of the presence-chamber
 died
 Into the distance, or embowering vied
 With far-away Goito's vine-frontier ;
 And crowds of faces—(only keeping
 clear
 The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-
 ground
 To fight their battle from)—deep clus-
 tered round
 Sordello, with good wishes no mere
 breath,
 Kind prayers for him no vapour, since,
 come death,
 Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every
 joint,
 Each bone new-marrowed as whom
 Gods anoint
 Though mortal to their rescue : now let
 sprawl
 The snaky volumes hither ! Is Typhon
 all

For Hercules to trample—good report
 From Salinguerra only to extort ?
 ' So was I ' (closed he his inculcating,
 A poet must be earth's essential king)
 ' So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
 'Tis not the royalty, ye witness quail,
 But one deposed who, caring not exert
 Its proper essence, trifled malapert
 With accidents instead—good things
 assigned
 As heralds of a better thing behind—
 And, worthy through display of these,
 put forth
 Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
 That constitutes him King precisely
 since
 As yet no other spirit may evince
 Its like : the power he took most pride
 to test,
 Whereby all forms of life had been pro-
 fessed
 At pleasure, forms already on the
 earth,
 Was but a means to power beyond,
 whose birth
 Should, in its novelty, be kingship's
 proof.
 Now, whether he came near or kept
 aloof
 The several forms he longed to imitate,
 Not there the kingship lay, he sees too
 late.
 Those forms, unalterable first as last,
 Proved him her copier, not the proto-
 plast
 Of nature : what could come of being
 free
 By action to exhibit tree for tree,
 Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove
 earth bore
 One veritable man or woman more ?
 Means to an end, such proofs are : what
 the end ?
 Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—
 Never contract ! Already you include
 The multitude ; then let the multitude
 Include yourself ; and the result were
 new :
 Themselves before, the multitude turn
 you.
 This were to live and move and have, in
 them,
 Your being, and secure a diadem

You should transmit (because no cycle
yearns

Beyond itself, but on itself returns)
When, the full sphere in wane, the
world o'erlaid

Long since with you, shall have in turn
obeyed

Some orb still prouder, some displayer,
still

More potent than the last, of human will,
And some new King depose the old. Of
such

Am I—w'iom pride of this elates too
much?

Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers
again;

I, with my words, hailed brother of the
train

Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world
roll back,

Who fails, through deeds howe'er
diverse, re-track

My purpose still, my task? A teeming
crust—

Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict!
Then, needs must

Emerge some Calm embodied, these
refer

The brawl to;—yellow-bearded Jupiter?
No! Saturn; some existence like a
pact

And—protest against Chaos, some first
fact

I' the faint of time. My deep of life,
I know,

Is unavailing e'en to poorly show' . . .
(For here the Chief immeasurably

yawned)

. . . 'Deeds in their due gradation till
Song dawned—

The fullest effluence of the finest mind,
All in degree, no way diverse in kind

From minds about it, minds which,
more or less

Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
Themselves on somewhat; but one
mind has climbed

Step after step, by just ascent sublimed
Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by
stage,

Is soul from body still to disengage
As tending to a freedom which rejects

Such help and incorporeally affects

The world, producing deeds but not by
deeds,

Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,
Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
To patiently perform till Song produced

Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind:
divest

Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's
unexpressed

Will dawns above us! All then is to win
Save that! How much for me, then?
where begin

My work? About me, faces! and they
flock,

The earnest faces! What shall I unlock
By song? behold me prompt, whate'er
it be,

To minister: how much can mortals see
Of Life? No more than so? I take the
task

And marshal you Life's elemental
masque,

Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress.
This light, this shade make prominent,
suppress

All ordinary hues that softening blend
Such natures with the level. Appre-
hend

Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
To those you doubt concerning! I en-
womb

Some wretched Friedrich with his red-
hot tomb;

Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
With the black chastening river I en-
gulph;

Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine
With languors of the planet of decline—
These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate
Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
Thus marshalled in the masque! My-
self, the while,

As one of you, am witness, shrink or
smile

At my own showing! Next age—what's
to do?

The men and women stationed hitherto
Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
At soonest, in the world: light,
thwarted, breaks

A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,

Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom :
 behold
 How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
 Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
 Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace
 make, war wage,
 In presence of you all ! Myself, implied
 Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
 I bade them do and suffer,—would last
 content
 The world . . . no—that's too far ! I
 circumvent
 A few, my masque contented, and to
 these
 Offer unveil the last of mysteries—
 Man's inmost life shall have yet freer
 play :
 Once more I cast external things away,
 And natures composite, so decompose
 That . . . Why, he writes *Sordello* !
 'How I rose,
 And how have you advanced ! since
 evermore
 Yourselves effect what I was fain before
 Effect, what I supplied yourselves
 suggest,
 What I leave bare yourselves can now
 invest.
 How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
 In half-words, call things by half-names,
 no balk
 From discontinuing old aids. To-day
 Takes in account the work of Yesterday :
 Has not the world a Past now, its adept
 Consults ere he dispense with or accept
 New aids ? a single touch more may
 enhance,
 A touch less turn to insignificance
 'Those structures' symmetry the Past
 has strewed
 The world with, once so bare. Leave
 the mere rude
 Explicit details ! 'tis but brother's
 speech
 We need, speech where an accent's
 change gives each
 Thootherssoul—nospeech to understand
 By former audience : need was then to
 expand,
 Expatiate—hardly were we brothers !
 true—
 Nor I lament my small remove from you,

Nor reconstruct what stands already.
 Ends
 Accomplished turn to means : my art
 intends
 New structure from the ancient : as
 they changed
 The spoils of every clime at Venice,
 ranged
 The horned and snouted Libyan god,
 upright
 As in his desert, by some simple bright
 Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,
 Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
 From earth's reputed consummations
 razed
 A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
 Above. Ah, whose that fortune ?
 ne'ertheless
 E'en he must stoop contented to express
 No tithe of what's to say—the vehicle
 Never sufficient : but his work is still
 For faces like the faces that select
 The single service I am bound effect,
 And bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
 Taurello to the Guef cause, disallow
 The Kaiser's coming—which with heart,
 soul, strength,
 I labour for, this eve, who feel at length
 My past career's outrageous vanity,
 And would, as its amends, die, even die
 Now I first estimate the boon of life,
 If death might win compliance—sure,
 this strife
 Is right for once—the People my support.'
 My poor Sordello ! what may we
 extort
 By this, I wonder ? Palma's lighted eyes
 Turned to Taurello who, long past sur-
 prise,
 Began, 'You love him—what you'd say
 at large
 Let me say briefly. First, your father's
 charge
 To me, his friend, peruse : I guessed
 indeed
 You were no stranger to the course
 decreed.
 He bids me leave his children to the
 saints :
 As for a certain project, he acquaints
 The Pope with that, and offers him the
 best
 Of your possessions to permit the rest

Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a stripe
Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
—To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
Clutches already; extricate, who can,
Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
Cartiglione, Loria!—all go,
And with them go my hopes. 'Tis lost,
then! Lost

This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd
spent

Like our admonisher! But each his bent
Pursues: no question, one might live
absurd

Oneself this while, by dead as he by
word,

Persisting to obtrude an influence where
'Tis made account of, much as . . . nay,
you fare

With twice the fortune, youngster!—I
submit,

Happy to parallel my waste of wit

With the renowned Sordello's: you
decide

A course for me. Romano may abide
Romano,—Bacchus! After all, what
dearth

Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?

Say there's a prize in prospect, must
disgrace

Betide competitors, unless they style
Themselves Romano? were it worth my
while

To try my own luck! But an obscure
place

Suits me—there wants a youth to bustle,
stalk

And attitudinize—some fight, more talk,
Most flaunting badges—how, I might
make clear,

Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here
—Here, pity they are like to lie! For me,
With station fixed unceremoniously
Long since, small use contesting; I am
but

The liegeman, you are born the lieges—
shut

That gentle mouth now! or resume
your kin

In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin
For me to work with! Could that neck
endure

This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,

She should . . . or might one bear it for
her? Stay—

I have not been so flattered many a
day

As by your pale friend—Bacchus! The
least help

Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's
whelp—

His neck is broad enough—a ready
tongue

Beside—too writhled—but, the main
thing, young—

I could . . . why, look ye!'

And the badge was thrown
Across Sordello's neck: 'This badge
alone

Makes you Romano's Head—becomes
superb

On your bare neck, which would, on
mine, disturb

The pauldron,' said Taurello. A mad
act,

Not even dreamed about before—in
fact,

Not when his sportive arm rose for the
nonce—

But he had dallied overmuch, this
once,

With power: the thing was done, and
he, aware

The thing was done, proceeded to
declare—

(So like a nature made to serve, excel
In serving, only feel by service well!)

—That he would make Sordello that
and more.

'As good a scheme as any! What's to
pore

At in my face?' he asked—ponder
instead

This piece of news; you are Romano's
Head!

One cannot slacken pace so near the
goal,

Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
This time! For you there's Palma to

espouse—

For me, one crowning trouble ere I
house

Like my compeer.

On which ensued a strange
And solemn visitation; there came
change

O'er every one of them ; each looked on each :

Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.

And when the giddiness sank and the haze

Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze, Sordello with the baldric on, his sire Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire

Momently ; and, interpreting the thrill Nigh at its ebb, Palma was found there still

Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed A year ago, while dying on her breast,— Of a contrivance that Vicenza night, When Ecelin had birth. ' Their convey's flight,

Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame

That wallowed like a dragon at his game The toppling city through—San Biagio rocks !

And wounded lies in her delicious locks Retrude, the frail mother, on her face, None of her wasted, just in one embrace Covering her child : when, as they lifted her,

Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke, Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,

Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward —drown

His colleague Ecelin's clamour, up and down

The disarray : failed Adelaide see then Who was the natural chief, the man of men ?

Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,

Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe

From wandering after his heritage Lost once and lost for aye—and why that rage,

That deprecating glance ? A new shape leant

On a familiar shape—gloatingly bent O'er his discomfiture ; ' mid wreaths it wore,

Still one outflamed the rest—her child's before

'Twas Salinguerra's for his child : scorn, hate

Rage, startled her from Ecelin—too late ! Then was the moment ! rival's foot had spurned

Never that brow to earth ! Ere sense returned—

The act conceived, adventured, and complete,

They bore away to an obscure retreat Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain '

(Nor even here Taurello moved) ' though pain

Was fled ; and what assured them most 'twas fled,

All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head

'Twould turn this way and that, waver awhile.

And only settle into its old smile— (Graceful as the disquieted water-flag

Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag

Oneither side their path)—when suffered look

Down on her child. They marched : no sign once shook

The company's close litter of crossed spears

Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears Slipt in the sunset from her long black lash,

And she was gone. So far the action rash—

No crime. They laid Retrude in the font.

Taurello's very gift, her child was wont To sit beneath—constant as eve he came

To sit by its attendant girls the same As one of them. For Palma, she would blend

With this magnific spirit to the end, That ruled her first—but scarcely had she dared

To disobey the Adelaide who scared Her into vowing never to disclose

A secret to her husband, which so froze His blood at half recital, she contrived

To hide from him Taurello's infant lived, Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar

Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,

Palma received that action: she was told
Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
Calm acquiescence in his lot ! But free
To impart the secret to Romano, she
Engaged to repossess Sordello of
His heritage, and hers, and that way
doff

The mask, but after years, long years !—
while now,
Was not Romano's sign-mark on that
brow ?

Across Taurello's heart his arms were
locked :
And when he did speak 'twas as if he
mocked
The minstrel, ' who had not to move,'
he said,
' Not stir—should Fate defraud him of
a shred
Of his son's infancy ? much less of his
youth !'

(Laughingly all this)—' which to aid, in
truth,
Himself, reserved on purpose, had not
grown
Old, not too old—'twas best they kept
alone

Till now, and never idly met till now ; '
—Then, in the same breath, told Sordello
how

All intimations of this eve's event
Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to
Trent,

Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there
stop,

Tumble the Church down, institute a-top
The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy :

—' That's now !—no prophesying what
may be

Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,
Native of Gesi, passing his youth's
prime

At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide
On whom . . .

' Embrace him, madman !'
Palma cried,

' Who through the laugh saw sweatdrops
burst apace,

And his lips' blanching: he did not
embrace

Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,

This while Sordello was becoming flushed
Out of his whiteness ; thoughts rushed,
fancies rushed ;

He pressed his hand upon his head and
signed

Both should forbear him. ' Nay, the
best's behind !'

Taurello laughed—not quite with the
same laugh :

' The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like
chaff

These Guefts, a despicable monk recoils
From : nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils
Our triumph !—Friedrich ? Think you,
I intend

Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood
I spend

And brain I waste ? Think you, the
people clap

Their hands at my out-hewing this wild
gap

For any Friedrich to fill up ? 'Tis mine—
That's yours : I tell you, towards some
such design

Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly,
yes,

And for another, yes—but worked no
less

With instinct at my heart ; I else had
swerved,

While now—look round ! My cunning
has preserved

Samminiato—that's a central place
Secures us Florence, boy,—in Pisa's
case,

By land as she by sea ; with Pisa ours,
And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours
The land at leisure ! Gloriously dis-
persed—

Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first
That flanked us (ah, you know not !) in
the March ;

On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,
Romagna and Bologna, whose first span
Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan ;
Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure !' . . .
So he proceeded : half of all this, pure
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too
true,

But what was undone he felt sure to do,
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
The pauldron-rings to give his sword-
arm play—

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Need of the sword now ! That would soon adjust Aught wrong at present ; to the sword intrust Sordello's whiteness, undersize : 'twas plain He hardly rendered right to his own brain— Like a brave hound, men educate to pride Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside, As though he could not, gift by gift, match men ! Palma had listened patiently : but when 'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw Taurello from his child, she, without awe Took off his iron arms from, one by one, Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done, Made him avert his visage and relieve Sordello (you might see his corselet heave The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak, then sank : They left him in the chamber. All was blank. And even reeling down the narrow stair Taurello kept up, as though unaware Palma was by to guide him, the old device —Something of Milan—' how we muster thrice The Torriani's strength there—all along Our own Visconti cowed them '—thus the song Continued even while she bade him stoop, Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop, The turnings to the gallery below, Where he stopped short as Palma let him go. When he had sat in silence long enough Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff She stooped the truncheon ; only to commence One of Sordello's poems, a pretence</p> | <p>For speaking, some poor rhyme of 'Elys' hair And head that 's sharp and perfect like a pear, So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks Stained like pale honey oozed from top-most rocks Sun-blanced the livelong Summer '—from his worst Performance, the Goito, as his first : And that end, conceiving from the brow And open mouth no silence would serve now, Went on to say the whole world loved that man And, for that matter, thought his face, tho' wan, Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made Her face a framework with his hands, a shade, A crown, an aureole : there must she remain (Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch) To get the best look at, in fittest niche Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow, —'Lauded her father for his treason now,' He told her, 'only, how could one suspect The wit in him?—whose clansman, recollect, Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same, Romano and his lady—so, might claim To know all, as she should '—and thus begun Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, 'not one Fit to be told that foolish boy,' he said, 'But only let Sordello Palma wed, —Then !' 'Twas a dim long narrow place at best : Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,</p> |
|--|---|

As shows its corpse the world's end
some split tomb—

A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
Faced Palma—but at length Taurello
set

Her free; the grating held one ragged jet
Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within
The hollow underneath—how else begin
Fate's second marvellous cycle, else
renew

The ages than with Palma plain in view?
Then paced the passage, hands clenched,
head erect.

Pursuing his discourse; a grand un-
checked

Monotony made out from his quick talk
And the recurring noises of his walk;
—Somewhat too much like the o'er-
charged assent

Of two resolved friends in one danger
blent.

Who hearten each the other against
heart—

Boasting there's nought to care for,
when, apart

The boaster, all's to care for. He,
beside

Some shape not visible, in power and
pride

Approached, out of the dark, ginglyly
near,

Nearer, passed close in the broad light,
his ear

Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-
fraught.

Just a snatch of the rapid speech you
caught,

And on he strode into the opposite dark
Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a
spark

I' the stone, and whirl of some loose
embossed thong

That crashed against the angle aye so
long

After the last, punctual to an amount
Of mailed great paces you could not but
count,—

Prepared you for the pacing back again.
And by the snatches you might ascertain
That, Friedrich's Prefecture sur-
mounted, left

By this alone in Italy, they cleft
Asunder, crushed together, at command

Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,
Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—
But garnished, Strength with Know-
ledge, 'if we deign

Accept that compromise and stoop to
give

Rome law, the Cæsars' Representative.'
—Enough, that the illimitable flood
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
In its faint reflux (you shall hear)
sufficed

Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed
Him on till, these long quiet in their
graves.

He found 'twas looked for that a whole
life's braves

Should somehow be made good—so,
weak and worn.

Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn
Of the To-Come, and fight his latest fight.
But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height—

He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if

He had our very Italy to keep
Or cast away, or gather in a heap

To garrison the better—ay, his word
Was, 'run the cucumber into a gourd.

Drive Trent upon Apulia'—at their
pitch

Who spied the continents and islands
which

Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in
the map—

(Strange that three such confessions so
should hap

To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
Amorous silence of the Swooning-
sphere.—

Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask
Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her
task

Was done, the labour of it—for, success,
Concerned not Palma, passion's votaross)

Triumph at height, and thus Sordello
crowned—

Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks
Taurello, bids

With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. 'Tis his own foot-
stamp—

Your hand! His summons! Nay, this
idle dapp

Befits not ! ' Out they two reeled dizzily.
'Visconti's strong at Milan,' resumed he,
In the old, somewhat insignificant way—
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to
say)

As though the spirit's flight, sustained
thus far,

Dropped at that very instant. Gone
they are—

Palma, Taurello ; Eglamor anon,
Ecelin,—only Naddo's never gone !

—Labours, this moonrise, what the
Master meant

'Is Squarcialupo speckled ?—purulent,
I'd say, but when was Providence put
out ?

He carries somehow handily about
His spite nor fouls himself ! ' Goito's
vines

Stand like a cheat detected—stark
rough lines,

The moon breaks through, a grey mean
scale against

The vault where, this eve's Maiden,
thou remain'st

Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who
can tell ?

As Heaven, now all 's at end, did not so
well,

Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
Its virgin quite to death in the lone
eve.

While the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha !
wait

No longer—these in compass, forward
fate !

BOOK THE SIXTH

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a
thought,

And yet a false one, was, ' Man shrinks
to nought

If matched with symbols of immensity—
Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet
sky

Or sea, too little for their quietude : '
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve
slow sank

Down the near terrace to the farther

And only one spot left out of the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite—

A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where they
mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in

To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
(Say, the monotonous speech from a
man's lip

Who lets some first and eager purpose
slip

In a new fancy's birth ; the speech keeps
on

Though elsewhere its informing soul be
gone)

—Aroused him,—surely offered succour.
Fate

Paused with this eve ; ere she precipitate
Herself,—put off strange after-thoughts
awhile,

That voice, those large hands, that
portentous smile,—

What help to pierce the Future as the
Past,

Lay in the plaining city ?

And at last

The main discovery and prime concern,
All that just now imported him to learn,
His truth, like yonder slow moon to
complete

Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his
feet,

Lighted his old life's every shift and
change,

Effort with counter-effort ; nor the
range

Of each looked wrong except wherein it
checked,

Some other—which of these could he
suspect,

Prying into them by the sudden blaze ?
The real way seemed made up of all the
ways—

Mood after mood of the one mind in him ;
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,

Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
Demanding only outward influence,

A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his
soul,

Power to uplift his power,—this moon's

Over the sea-depths,—and their mass
had swept

Onward from the beginning and still kept
Its course : but years and years the sky
above

Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
His sensitiveness idled, now a mort,
Alive now, and to sullenness or sport
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
At every passing instigation, grew
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-
showers spilt,

Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt
Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding
race

Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found
place

For much display; not gathered up and,
hurled

Right from its heart, encompassing the
world.

So had Sordello been, by consequence,
Without a function : others made pre-
tence

To strength not half his own, yet had
some core

Within, submitted to some moon, before
Them still, superior still whate'er their
force,—

Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
Nor missed life's crown, authentic
attribute.

To each who lives must be a certain
fruit

Of having lived in his degree,—a stage,
Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
To stop at; and to this the spirits tend
Who, still discovering beauty without
end,

Amass the scintillations, make one star
—Something unlike them, self-sustained,
afar,—

And meanwhile nurse the dream of being
blest

By winning it to notice and invest
Their souls with alien glory, some one day
When'er the nucleus, gathering shape
always,

Round to the perfect circle—soon or late,
According as themselves are formed to
wait ;

Whether mere human beauty will suffice
—The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,

Or human intellect seem best, or each
Combine in some ideal form past reach
On earth, or else some shade of these,
some aim,

Some love, hate even, take their place,
the same,

And may be served—all this they do not
lose,

Waiting for death to live, nor idly
choose

What must be Hell—a progress thus
pursued

Through all existence, still above the food
That's offered them, still toweing
beyond

The widened range, in virtue of their
bond

Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's
Love,

A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
To swaying all Sordello : wherefore
doubt,

That Love meet for such Strength, some
moo ; without

Would match his sea ?—or fear, Good
manifest,

Only the Best breaks faith ?—Ah, but
the Best

Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
And is not ! crave we gems ? no penury
Of their material round us ! pliant
earth,

The plastic flame—what balks the mage
his birth

—Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the
block ?

Flinders enrich the strand, and veins
the rock—

Nought more ! Ask creatures ? Life's
i' the tempest, Thought

Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods
are fraught

With fervours : ah, these forms are well
enough !

But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
Profuse at Nature's pleasure, men
beyond

These men ! and thus, perchance, are
over-fond

In arguing, from Good the Best, from
force

Divided—force combined, an ocean's
course

From this our sea whose mere intestine
pants

Might seem at times sufficient to our
wants.

—External Power? If none be adequate
And he stand forth ordained (a prouder
fate)

A law to his own sphere?—need to
remove

All incompleteness, for that law, that
love?

Nay, if all other laws be such, though
veiled

In mercy to each vision that had failed,
If unassisted by its want,—for lure,

Embodied? Stronger vision could
endure

The unbodied want: no bauble for a
truth!

The People were himself; and, by the
ruth

At their condition, was he less impelled
To alter the discrepancy beheld,

Than if, from the sound Whole, a sickly
Part

Subtracted were transformed, decked
out with art,

Then palmed on him as alien woe—the
Gulf

To succour, proud that he forsook him-
self?

No! All's himself; all service, there-
fore, rates

Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
The rest: but all in time! 'That lance

of yours
Makes havoc soon with Malek and his
Moors,

That buckler's lined with many a giant's
beard

Ere long, O champion, be the lance up-
reared,

The buckler wielded handsomely as
now!

But view your escort, bear in mind your
vow,

Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere
that,

And, if you hope we struggle through
the flat,

Put lance and buckler by! Next half-
month lacks

Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe

To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-
pear

Which bristling holds Cydippe by the
hair,

Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled,
we'll try

The picturesque achievements by and
by—

Next life!

Ay, rally, mock, oh People,
urge

Your claims!—for thus he ventured, to
the verge,

Push a vain mummery which perchance
distrust

Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
Likewise: accordingly the Crowd—as

yet
He had unconsciously contrived forget
I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . .

one might assuage

The signal horrors easier than engage
With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief

Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,

But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
To correspond . . . this Crowd then, forth

they stood.

'And now content thy stronger vision,
brood

On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by
turf,

Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-
worms' scurf!

Down sank the People's then; up-
rose their Now.

These sad ones render service to! And
how

Piteously little must that service prove
—Had surely proved in any case! for,

move
Each other obstacle away, let youth
Have been aware it had surprised a

truth
'Twere service to impart—can truth be

seized,
Settled forthwith, and, of the captive

eased,
Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
So happily, no gesture luring it,

The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
Most vain! a life's to spend ere this he

chain,

To the poor crowd's complacency; ere
the crowd

Pronounce it captured, he describes a
cloud

Its kin of twice the plume—which he, in
turn,

If he shall live as many lives, may learn
How to secure—not else. Then Mantua
called

Back to his mind how certain bards were
thrall'd

—Buds blasted, but of breath more like
perfume

Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion
bloom:

Some insane rose that burnt heart out
in sweets,

A spendthrift in the Spring, no Summer
greet—

Some Dularete, drunk with truths and
wine,

Grown bestial, dreaming how become
divine.

' Yet to surmount this obstacle, com-
mence

With the commencement, merits
crowning! Hence

Must truth be casual truth, elicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals disspread

So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time
Of the world's story has not truth, the
prime

Of truth, the very truth which, loosed,
had hurled

The world's course right, been really in
the world

—Content the while with some mean
spark by dint

Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip its breast,

would stream
Sky-ward!

Sordello's miserable gleam
Was looked for at the moment: he
would dash

This badge, and all it brought, to earth,
—abash

Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him
wrest

The Kaiser from his purpose,—would
attest

His own belief, in any case. Before
He dashes it, however, think once more!

For, were that little, truly service?
Ay—

I' the end, no doubt; but meantime?
Plain you spy

Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
Of vision blur each intervening cause.

Were the day's fraction clear as the life's
sum

Of service, Now as filled as the To-come
With evidence of good—nor too minute

A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
'Twere fittest maintain the Guelfs in
rule:

That makes your life's work: but you
have to school

Your day's work on these natures
circumstanced

Thus variously, which yet, as each ad-
vanced

Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be
moved

Now, for the Then's sake,—hating what
you loved,

Loving old hatreds! nor if one man bore
Brand upon temples while his fellow
wore

The aureole, would it task you to decide—
But, portioned duly out, the Future vied
Never with the unparcelled Present!

Smite

Or spare so much on warrant all so
slight?

The Present's complete sympathies to
break,

Aversions bear with, for a Future's sake
So feeble? Tito ruined through one
speck,

The Legate saved by his sole lightish
fleck?

This were work, true—but work per-
formed at cost

Of other work—ought gained here, else-
where lost.

For a new segment spoil an orb half-done?
Rise with the People one step, and sink
—one?

Were it but one step—less than the
whole face

Of things, your novel duty bids erase!
Harms to abolish! what? the prophet
saith,

The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old
faith,

Old courage, only born because of
 harms,
 Were not, from highest to the lowest,
 charms ?
 Flame may persist but is not glare as
 staunch ?
 Where the salt marshes stagnate,
 crystals branch—
 Blood driest to crimson—Evil's beautified
 In every shape. Thrust Beauty then
 aside
 And banish Evil ! wherefore ? After all,
 Is Evil a result less natural
 Than Good ? For, overlook the seasons'
 strife
 With tree and flower,—the hideous
 animal life,
 (Of which who seeks shall find a grinning
 taunt
 For his solution, and endure the vaunt
 Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
 Himself befooled, unable to propose
 Aught better than the fooling)—and but
 care
 For Men, for the mere People then and
 there,—
 In these, could you but see that Good
 and Ill
 Claimed you alike ! Whence rose their
 claim but still
 From Ill, as fruit of Ill—what else could
 knit
 You theirs but Sorrow ? Any free from
 it
 Were also free from you ! Whose happi-
 ness
 Could be distinguished in this morning's
 press
 Of miseries ?—the fool's who passed a
 gibe
 " On thee," jeered he, " so wedded to
 thy tribe,
 Thou carriest green and yellow tokens in
 Thy very face that thou art Ghibel-
 lin !"—
 Much hold on you that fool obtained !
 Nay mount
 Yet higher—and upon men's own
 account
 Must Evil stay : for, what is Joy ?—to
 heave
 Up one obstruction more, and common
 leave

What was peculiar—by such act destroy
 Itself ; a partial death is every joy ;
 The sensible escape, enfranchisement
 Of a sphere's essence : once the vexed—
 content,
 The cramped—at large, the growing
 circle—round,
 All's to begin again—some novel bound
 To break, some new enlargement to
 entreat,
 The sphere though larger is not more
 complete.
 Now for Mankind's experience : who
 alone
 Might style the unobstructed world his
 own ?
 Whom palled Goito with its perfect
 things ?
 Sordello's self ! whereas for mankind
 springs
 Salvation by each hindrance interposed ;
 They climb, life's view is not at once
 disclosed
 To creatures caught up, on its summit
 left,
 Heaven plain above them, yet of wings
 bereft—
 But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot,
 While, range on range, the girdling
 forests shoot
 'Twixt your plain prospect and the
 throngs who scale
 Height after height, and pierce mists,
 veil by veil,
 Heartened with each discovery ; in their
 soul,
 The Whole they seek by Parts—but,
 found that Whole,
 Could they revert, enjoy past gains ?
 The space
 Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
 The Parts, were more than plenty, once
 attained
 The Whole, to quite exhaust it : nought
 were gained
 But leave to look—not leave to do :
 Beneath
 Soon sates the looker—look Above, and
 Death
 Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted.
 Live
 First, and die soon enough, Sordello !
 Give

Body and spirit the first right they
 claim,
 And pasture thee on a voluptuous
 shame
 That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,
 Art neither vilely lodged midst Lombard
 men—
 Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to
 truck
 Thine attributes away for sordid muck,
 Yet manage from that very muck educe
 Gold ; then subject, nor scruple, to thy
 cruce
 The world's discardings ! Though real
 ingots pay
 Thy pains, the clods that yielded them
 are clay
 To all save thee,—would clay remain,
 though quenched
 Thy purging-fire ; who 's robbed then ?
 Had you wrenched
 An ample treasure forth !—As 'tis, they
 crave
 A share that ruins you and will not save
 Them. Why should sympathy com-
 mand you quit
 The course that makes your joy, nor
 will remit
 Their woe ? Would all arrive at joy ?
 Reverse
 The order (time instructs you) nor coerce
 Each unit till, some predetermined
 mode,
 The total be emancipate ; men's road
 Is one, men's times of travel many ;
 thwart
 No enterprising soul's precocious start
 Before the general march ! if slow or
 fast
 All straggle up to the same point at last,
 Why grudge your having gained, a
 month ago,
 The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in
 blow,
 While they were landlocked ? Speed
 their Then, but how
 This badge would suffer you improve
 your Now !
 His time of action for, against, or with
 Our world (I labour to extract the pith
 Of this his problem) grew, that even-
 tide,
 Gigantic with its power of joy, beside

The world's eternity of impotence
 To profit though at his whole joy's
 expense.
 ' Make nothing of my day because so
 brief ?
 Rather make more—instead of joy, use
 grief
 Before its novelty have time subside !
 Wait not for the late savour—leave un-
 tried
 Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick
 squeeze
 Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
 Of life !—together let wrath, hatred,
 lust,
 All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
 Upon this Now, which time may reason
 out
 As mischiefs, far from benefits, no
 doubt —
 But long ere then Sordello will have slept
 Away—you teach him at Goito's crypt,
 There 's a blank issue to that fiery thrill !
 Stirring, the few cope with the many,
 still :
 So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
 Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
 Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render
 void
 The whole calm glebe's endeavour : be
 employed !
 And e'en though somewhat smart the
 Crowd for this,
 Contribute each his pang to make your
 bliss,
 'Tis but one pang—one blood-drop to
 the bowl
 Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp
 uncowl
 At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
 And, kindling orbs grey as the unripe
 grape
 Before, avails forthwith to disentrance
 The portent—soon to lead a mystic
 dance
 Among you ! For, who sits alone in
 Rome ?
 Have those great hands indeed hewn out
 a home,
 And set me there to live ? Oh life, life-
 breath,
 Life-blood,—ere sleep, come travail, life
 ere death !

This life stream on my soul, direct,
 oblique,
 But always streaming! Hindrances?
 They pique—
 Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my
 soul o'ertops
 Each height, than every depth pro-
 foundlier drops?
 Enough that I can live, and would live!
 Wait
 For some transcendent life reserved by
 Fate
 To follow this? Oh, never! Fate, I
 trust
 The same, my soul to; for, as who
 flings dust,
 Perchance—so facile was the deed, she
 chequed
 The void with these materials to affect
 My soul diversely—these consigned anew
 To nought by death, what marvel if she
 threw
 A second and superber spectacle
 Before it? What may serve for sun—
 what still
 Wander a moon above me—what else
 wind
 About me like the pleasures left behind,
 And how shall some new flesh that is not
 flesh
 Cling to me? what's new laughter—
 soothes the fresh
 Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for
 my sake
 In brave resource, but whether bids she
 slake
 My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
 No draught worth lip save from the
 rocky fount
 Above i' the clouds, while here she's
 provident
 Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-
 tent
 Guards, with its face of reate and sedge,
 nor fail
 The silver globules and gold-sparkling
 grail
 At bottom. Oh, 'twere too absurd to
 slight
 For the hereafter the to-day's delight!
 Quench thirst at this, then seek next
 well-spring—wear
 Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!

Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest
 heart
 Offer to serve, contented for my part
 To give life up in service,—only grant
 That I do serve; if otherwise, why want
 Aught further of me? If men cannot
 choose
 But set aside life, why should I refuse
 The gift? I take it—I, for one, engage
 Never to falter through my pilgrimage—
 Nor end it howling that the stock or
 stone
 Were enviable, truly: I, for one,
 Will praise the world, you style mere
 anteroom
 To the palace—be it so! shall I assume
 —My foot the courtly gait, my tongue
 the trope,
 My mouth the smirk, before the doors
 fly ope
 One moment? What—with guarders
 row on row,
 Gay swarms of varletry that come and
 go,
 Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
 The plackets of, pert claimants help
 displace,
 Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for,—
 laugh
 At yon sleek parasite, break his own
 staff
 'Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's
 shoulder,—why,
 Admitted to the presence by and by,
 Should thought of having lost these
 make me grieve
 Among new joys I reach, for joys I
 leave?
 —Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-
 stone,
 Are floor-work here!—But did I let
 alone
 That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
 Once and for ever?—Floor-work? No
 such fool!
 Rather, were heaven to forestall earth,
 I'd say
 I, is it, must be blessed? Then, my own
 way
 Bless me! give firmer arm and fleetest
 foot,
 I'll thank you: but to no mad wings
 transmute

These limbs of mine—our greensward
was so soft !

Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft :
We feel the bliss distinctlier, having
thus

Engines subservient, not mixed up with
us.

Better move palpably through heaven—
nor, freed

Of flesh, forsooth, from space to space
proceed

'Mid flying synods of worlds ! No ! In
heaven's marge

Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his
targe

Solid with stars—the Centaur, at his
game,

Made tremulously out in hoary flame !
Life ! Yet the very cup whose extreme
dull

Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed,
at full,

Aside so oft ; the death I fly, revealed
So oft a better life this life concealed,
And which sage, champion, martyr,
through each path

Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid
bath,

The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
—'Twas well for them ; let me become
aware

As they, and I relinquish life, too ! Let
What masters life disclose itself ! For-
get

Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel
—So much is truth to me. What Is,
then ? Since

One object, viewed diversely, may
evince

Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,
That way repel, why gloze upon the
fact ?

Why must a single of the sides be right ?
What bids choose this and leave the
opposite ?

Where 's abstract Right for me ?—in
youth endured

With Right still present, still to be
pursued,

Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
Each with its proper law and mode of
life,

Each to be dwelt at ease in : where, to
sway

Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
Implicit with his serf of flutterin' heart,
Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to
start

Up, Brutus in the presence, then goshout
That some should pick the unstrung
jewels out—

Each, well !'
And, as in moments when the
Past

Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
Himself quite through mere secondary
states

Of his soul's essence, little loves and
hates,

Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these ; as who should pierce hill,
plain, grove, glade,

And on into the very nucleus probe
That first determined there exist a
globe.

As that were easiest, half the globe dis-
solved,

So seemed Sordello's closing-truth
evolved

By his flesh-half's break up—the sudden
swell

Of his expanding soul showed Ill and
Well,

Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the
Less,

All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this
one sphere,

Urgent on these, but not of force to
bind

Eternity, as Time—as Matter—Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a Life : thus
girt

With circumstance, next change beholds
them cinct

Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill
distinct,

Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—
Contrived to render easy, difficult,

This or the other course of . . . what new
bond

In place of flesh may stop their flight
beyond,

Its new sphere, as that course does harm
 or good
 To its arrangements. Once this under-
 stood,
 As suddenly he felt himself alone,
 Quite out of Time and this world: all
 was known.
 What made the secret of his past despair?
 —Most imminent when he seemed most
 aware
 Of his own self-sufficiency; made mad
 By craving to expand the power he had,
 And not new power to be expanded?—
 just
 This made it; Soul on Matter being
 thrust,
 Joy comes when so much Soul is wrecked
 in Time
 On Matter,—let the Soul's attempt
 sublime
 Matter beyond the scheme and so
 prevent
 By more or less that deed's accomplish-
 ment,
 And Sorrow follows **Sorrow** how avoid?
 Let the employer match the thing em-
 ployed,
 Fit to the finite his infinity,
 And thus proceed for ever, in degree
 Changed but in kind the same, still
 limited
 To the appointed circumstance and dead
 To all beyond. A sphere is but a
 sphere—
 Small, Great, are merely terms we
 bandy here—
 Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
 Are like: now, of the present sphere we
 call
 Life, are conditions—take but this
 among
 Many; the body was to be so long
 Youthful, no longer—but, since no
 control
 Tied to that body's purposes his soul,
 She chose to understand the body's
 trade
 More than the body's self—had fain
 conveyed
 Her boundless, to the body's bounded
 lot:
 Hence, the soul permanent, the body
 not,—

Scarce the one minute for enjoying
 here,
 The soul must needs instruct her weak
 compeer,
 Run o'er its capabilities and wring
 A joy thence, she held worth experi-
 encing—
 Which, far from half discovered even,—
 lo,
 The minute gone, the body's power let go
 That's portioned to that joy's acquire-
 ment ' Broke
 Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it
 woke—
 From the volcano's vapour-flag, winds
 hoist
 Black o'er the spread of sea,—down to
 the moist
 Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with
 rain,
 Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise
 again—
 (The Small, a sphere as perfect as the
 Great
 To the soul's absoluteness)—meditate
 Too long on such a morning's cluster-
 chord
 And the whole music it was framed
 afford,—
 The chord's might half discovered, what
 should pluck
 One string, his finger, was found palsy-
 struck.
 And then no marvel if the spirit, shown
 A saddest sight—the body left alone
 Through her officious proffered help,
 deprived
 Of this and that enjoyment Fate con-
 trived,
 Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip
 hence,—
 Vain-gloriously were fain, for recom-
 pense,
 To stem the ruin even yet, protract
 The body's term, supply the power it
 lacked
 From her infinity, compel it learn
 These qualities were only Time's con-
 cern,
 And body may, with spirit helping,
 barred—
 Advance the same, vanquished—obtain
 reward,

Reap joy where sorrow was intended
grow,
Of Wrong make Right, and turn Ill
Good below.

And the result is, the poor body soon
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous
boon,
Leaving its bright accomplice all
aghast.

So much was plain then, proper in the
Past ;

To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
Exceeded, so was incomplete for, each
Single sphere—Time. But does our
knowledge reach

No farther ? Is the cloud of hindrance
broke

But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death
lets soar

Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that shall
elapse

'Twixt his enthrallment in new bonds,
perhaps ?

Must life be ever just escaped, which
should

Have been enjoyed ?—nay, might have
been and would,

Each purpose ordered right—the soul's
no whit

Beyond the body's purpose under it—
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven,
a bay,

And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where
they mixed

As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die—would soul, proportioned thus,
begin

Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
The body if, aspiring, it rebel ?

But how so order life ? Still brutalize
The soul, the sad world's way, with
muffled eyes

To all that was before, all that shall be
After this sphere—and every quality
Save some sole and immutable Great and
Good

And Beauteous whither fate has loosed
its hood

To follow ? Never may some soul see All
—The Great Before and After, and the
Small

Now, yet be saved by this the simplest
lore,

And take the single course prescribed
before,

As the king-bird with ages on his
plumes

Travels to die in his ancestral glooms ?
But where descry the Love that shall
select

That course ? Here is a soul whom, to
affect,

Nature has plied with all her means—
from trees

And flowers—e'en to the Multitude !—
and these,

Decides he save or no ? One word to
end !

Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
And speak for you. Of a Power above
you still

Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by
man—

What need ! And of—none the minutest
duct

To that out-nature, nought that would
instruct

And so let rivalry begin to live—
But of a Power its representative

Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim

A course, the first chose and this last
revealed—

This Human clear, as that Divine con-
cealed—

What utter need !

What has Sordello found ?
Or can his spirit go the mighty round,

End where poor Eglamor begun ? as
says

Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
About the world : where, in the midst,
they met,

Though on a shifting waste of sand, men
set

Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sor-
dello found ?

For they approach—approach—that
foot's rebound . . .

Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the thrèshold,
dash the veil

Aside—and you divine who sat there
dead,

Under his foot the badge: still, Palma
said,

A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he
spies

Help from above in his extreme despair,
And, head far back on shoulder thrust,
turns there

With short, quick, passionate cry: as
Palma prest

In one great kiss her lips upon his breast
It beat. By this, the hermit-bee has
stopped

His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he
bit,

Twirled so, and filed all day: the
mansion's fit,

God counselled for. As easy guess the
word

That passed betwixt them and become
the third

To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
Him with one fault—so, no remem-
brance racks

Of the stone maidens and the font of
stone

He, creeping through the crevice, leaves
alone.

Alas, my friend—alas Sordello, whom
Anon they laid within that old font-
tomb—

And, yet again, alas!

And now is 't worth
Our while bring back to mind, much less
set forth

How Salinguerra extricates himself
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf
May fight their fiercest out? If Richard
sulked

In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot,
sure,

Was peace; our chief made some frank
overture

That prospered; compliment fell thick
and fast

On its disposer, and Taurello passed

With foe and friend for an outstripping
soul,

Nine days at least. Then,—fairly
reached the goal,—

He, by one effort, blotted the great hope
Out of his mind, nor further tried to
cope

With Este, that mad evening's style, but
sent

Away the Legate and the League, con-
tent

No blame at least the brothers had in-
curred,

—Despatched a message to the Monk,
he heard

Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin
mat

And ne'er spoke more,—informed the
Ferrarese

He but retained their rules so long as these
Lingered in pupilage,—and last, no mode

Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy

For Friedrich,—none, that is, to guarantee
The faith and promptitude of who
should next

Obtain Sofia's dowry,—sore perplexed—
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe

Of daughters Ecelin was wont to bribe
The envious n.agnates with—nor, since

he sent

Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—'we

lost

Egna last year, and who takes Egna's
post—

Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich
knock?')

Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock
In pure necessity, and so destroyed

His slender last of chances, quite made
void

Old prophecy, and spite of all the
schemes

Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's
dreams,

Was sucked into Romano. And so
hushed

He up this evening's work that, when
'twas brushed

Somehow against by a blind chronicle
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell

Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe
Of 'Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo
Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his
sire,'

The townfolk rubbed their eyes, could
but admire
Which of Sofia's five was meant.

The chaps
Of earth's dead hope were tardy to
collapse,

Obliterated not the beautiful
Distinctive features at a crash—but dull
And duller, next year, as Guelph chiefs
withdrew

Each to his stronghold. Then (securely
too

Ecelin at Campese slept—close by,
Who likes may see him in Solagna lie
With cushioned head and gloved hand
to denote

The cavalier he was)—then his heart
smote

• Young Ecelin at last !—long since adult,
And, save Vicenza's business, what
result

In blood and blaze? ('twas hard to
intercept

Sordello till his plain withdrawal.) Stept,
Then, its new lord on Lombardy. 'I' the
nick

Of time when Ecelin and Alberic
Closest with Tau e'lo, come precisely news
That in Verona half the souls refuse
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—
Have cast them from a throne they bid
him mount,

Their Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.
Ece in flew there, and the town hence-
forth

Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back
From temporary station to a track
That suited. News received of this
acquist,

Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who
missed

Taurello then? Another year: they took
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
For refuge, and, when hundreds two or
three

Of Guelphs conspired to call themselves
'the Free,'

Opposing Alberic,—vile Bassanese,—
(Without Sordello !)—Ecelin at ease .

Slaughtered them so observably, that
oft

A little Salinguerra looked with soft
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper
age

To get appointed his proud uncle's page.
More years passed, and that sire had
dwindled down

To a me e showy turbulent soldier,
grown

Better through age, his parts still in
repute,

Subtle—how else ?—but hardly so
astute

As his contemporaneous friends pro-
fessed ;

Undoubtedly a brawler : for the rest,
Known by each neighbour, and allowed
for, let

Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
Men who had missed their boyhood's
bugbear—' trap

The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
A battered pinion '—was the word. In
fine,

One flap too much and Venice's marine
Was meddled with ; no overlooking
that !

She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
Than force, to speak the truth : there's
slender laud

Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
To pull his death on such a man—fate
shears

The life-cord prompt enough whose last
fine threads

You fritter: so, presiding his board-
head,

The old smile, your assurance all went
well

With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)
In rushed (a plan contrived before) our
friends,

Made some pretence at fighting, some
amends

For the shame done his eighty years—
(apart

The principle, none found it in his heart
To be much angry with Taurello)—
gained

Their galleys with the prize, and what
remained .

But carry him to Venice for a show ?
 —Set him, as 'twere, down gently—free
 to go
 His gait, inspect our square, pretend
 observe
 The swallows soaring their eternal curve
 'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
 Gathered importunately, lives and tens,
 To point their children the Magnifico,
 All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
 His gait among them now—'it took,
 indeed,
 Fully this Ecelin to supersede
 That man,' remarked the seniors.
 Singular !
 Sordello's inability to bar
 Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly
 brought
 About by his strange disbelief that
 aught
 Was ever to be done,—this thrust the
 Twain
 Under Taurello's tutelage,—whom,
 brain
 And heart and hand, he forthwith in one
 rod
 Indissolubly bound to baffle God
 Who loves the world—and thus allowed
 the thin
 Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
 And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic
 (Mere man, alas !) to put his problem
 quick
 To demonstration—prove wherever 's
 will
 To do, there 's plenty to be done, or ill
 Or good. Anointed, then, to rend and
 rip—
 Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw
 and whip.
 They plagued the world : a touch of
 Hildebrand
 (So far from obsolete !) made Lombards
 band
 Together, cross their coats as for Christ's
 cause,
 And saving Milan win the world's
 applause.
 Ecelin perished : and I think grass
 grew
 Never so pleasant as in Valley Rù
 By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
 Saw his exasperated captors burn

Seven children and their mother ; then,
 regaled
 So far, tied on to a wild horse, was
 trailed
 To death through raunce and bramble-
 bush. I take
 God's part and testify that mid the
 brake
 Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant
 knoll,
 You hear its one tower left, a belfry,
 toll—
 The earthquake spared it last year,
 laying flat
 The modern church beneath,—no harm
 in that !
 Cherups the contumacious grasshopper,
 Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre
 Above the ravage : there, at deep of day
 A week since, heard I the old Canon say
 He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst
 And Alberic's huge skeleton unheard
 Only five years ago. He added, ' June 's
 The month for carding off our first
 cocoon
 The silkworms fabricate '—a double
 news,
 Nor he nor I could tell the worthier.
 Choose !
 And Naddo gone, all 's gone ; not
 Eglamor !
 Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
 A guest my spirit of the golden courts !
 Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,
 Disuse, some wear of years, that face
 retained
 Its joyous look of love ! Suns waxed and
 waned,
 And still my spirit held an upward flight,
 Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
 More and more gorgeous—ever that face
 there
 The last admitted ! crossed, too, with
 some care
 As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
 But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
 —A transient struggle, haply a painful
 sense
 Of the infernality's elingling—whence
 Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
 Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
 Of irrepressible admiration—not
 Aspiring, all considered, to their lot

Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
Thy frank delight at their exclusive
track,

That upturned fervid face and hair put
back !

Is there no more to say ? He of the
rhymes—

Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
Was born : Sordello die at once for men ?
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti*
saved

Mantua, and elsewhere notably be-
haved—

Who thus, by fortune's ordering events,
Passed with posterity, to all intents,
For just the god he never could become.
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were
never dumb

In praise of him : while what he should
have been,

Could be, and was not—the one step too
mean

For him to take,—we suffer at this day
Because of : Ecclin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and
take

That step Sordello spurned, for the
world's sake :

He did much—but Sordello's chance was
gone.

Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed—'twas a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it
—As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he
dozed

Really at home—one who was chiefly
glad

To have achieved the few real deeds he
had,

Because that way assured they were not
worth

Doing, so spared from doing them
henceforth—

A tree that covets fruitage and yet
tastes

Never itself, itself : had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked
Hesperian fruit

And, praising that, just thrown him in
to boot

All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all ! cannot I say
He lived for some one better thing ? this
way.—

Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless hill
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,
Morning just up, higher and higher runs
A child barefoot and rosy. See ! the
sun's

On the square castle's inner-court's low
wall

Like the chine of some extinct animal
Half turned to earth and flowers ; and
through the haze

(Save where some slender patches of
grey maize

Are to be overleaped) that boy has crost
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-
frost

Matting the balm and mountain camo-
mile.

Up and up goes he, singing all the while
Some unintelligible words to beat

The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
So worsted is he at ' the few fine locks
Stained like pale honey oozed from top-
most rocks

Sunblanched the livelong summer,—all
that's left

Of the Goito lay ! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello ! In effect
He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect
Not utterly companionless ; but,
friends,

Wake up ; the ghost's gone, and the
story ends

I'd fain hope, sweetly—seeing, peri or
ghoul,

That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,
Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink
Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank !
ye snuff

Civet, I warrant. Really ? Like enough !
Merely the savour's rareness ; any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose :
Rifle a musk-pod and 'twill ache like
yours !

I'd tell you that same pungency ensures
An after-gust—but that were overbold.
Who would has heard Sordello's story
told.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

1864

JAMES LEE

I

JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE
WINDOW

I

Ah, love, but a day,
And the world has changed !
The sun's away,
And the bird's estranged ;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged :
Summer has stopped.

II

Look in my eyes !
Wilt thou change too ?
Should I fear surprise ?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year ?

III

Thou art a man,
But I am thy love !
For the lake, its swan ;
For the dell, its dove ;
And for thee—(oh, haste !)
Me, to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced !

II

BY THE FIRESIDE

I

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
Oak and pine ?
Oh, for the ills half-understood,
The dim, dead woe
Long ago
Befallen this bitter coast of France !
Well, poor sailors took their chance ;
I take mine.

II

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
O'er the sea :
Do sailors eye the casement—mute,
Drenched and stark,
From their bark—
And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
O' the warm safe house and happy
freight
—Thee and me ?

III

God help you, sailors, at your need !
Spare the curse !
For some ships, safe in port indeed,
Rot and rust,
Run to dust,
All through worms i' the wood, which
crept,
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept :
That is worse !

IV

Who lived here before us two ?
Old-world pairs !
Did a woman ever—would I knew !—
Watch the man
With whom began
Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash
your teeth !)
When planks start, open hell beneath
Unawares ?

III

IN THE DOORWAY

I

The swallow has set her six young on
the rail,
And looks sea-ward :
The water's in stripes like a snake,
olive-pale
To the leeward,—
On the weather-side, black, spotted
white with the wind :

'Good fortune departs, and disaster's
behind,'—
Hark, the wind with its wants and its
infinite wail !

II

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the salt-
ness, has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to
the world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for
her sake :
How the vines writhe in rows, each
impaled on its stake !
My heart shrivels up, and my spirit
shrinks curled.

III

Yet here are we two ; we have love.
house enough,
With the field there,
This house of four rooms, that field
red and rough,
Though it yield there,
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade
or a bent ;
If a magpie alight now, it seems an
event ;
And they both will be gone at Novem-
ber's rebuff.

IV

But why must cold spread ? but where-
fore bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate His with an
infinite range,
And inherit
His power to put life in the darkness
and cold ?
Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be
bold !
Whom Summer made friends of, let
Winter estrange !

IV

ALONG THE BEACH

I

I will be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.

You wanted my love—is that much
true ?
And so I did love, so I do :
What has come of it all along ?

II

I took you—how could I otherwise ?
For a world to me, and more ;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

III

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth !
Now do I mis-state, mistake ?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it
worth ?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake ?

IV

Oh, love, love, no, love ! not so, indeed !
You were just weak earth, I knew :
With much in you waste, with many
a weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

V

And such as you were, I took you for
mine :
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the vine,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures ?

VI

Well, and if none of these good things
came,
What did the failure prove ?
The man was my whole world, all the
same,
With his flowers to praise, or his weeds
to blame,
And, either or both, to love.

VII

Yet this turns now to a fault—there !
there !
That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear ;
And 'tis all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song :

VIII

How the light, light love, he has wings
to fly

At suspicion of a bond :
How my wisdom has bidden your
pleasure good-bye,
Which will turn up next in a laughing
eye,
And why should you look beyond ?

V

ON THE CLIFF

I

I leaned on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf ;
For the turf, to call it grass were to
mock :
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

II

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face :
No iron like that !
Baked dry ; of a weed, of a shell, no
trace :

Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I'll say,
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned
too,
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fell two red fans of a butterfly :
No turf, no rock, in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red !

V

Is it not so
With the minds of men ?
The level and low,

The burnt and bare, in themselves ;
but then
With such a blue and red grace, not
theirs,
Love setting unawares !

VI

READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF

I

' Still ailing, Wind ? Wilt be appeased
or no ?
Which needs the other's office, thou
or I ?
Dost want to be disburthened of a woe,
And can, in truth, my voice untie
Its links, and let it go ?

II

' Art thou a dumb, wronged thing that
would be righted,
Entrusting thus thy cause to me ?
Forbear.
No tongue can mend such pleadings ;
faith, requited
With falsehood,—love, at last aware
Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

III

' We have them ; but I know not any
tone
So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow :
Dost think men would go mad without
a moan,
If they knew any way to borrow
A pathos like thy own ?

IV

' Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the
sighs ? The one
So long escaping from lips starved
and blue,
That lasts while on her pallet-bed the
nun
Stretches her length ; her foot comes
through
The straw she shivers on ;

V

' You had not thought she was so tall :
and spent,
Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers
shut

Close, close, their sharp and livid nails
indent

The clammy palm ; then all is mute :
That way, the spirit went.

VI

'Or wouldst thou rather that I under-
stand

Thy will to help me ?—like the dog
I found

Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
Who would not take my food, poor
hound,
But whined and licked my hand.'

VII

All this, and more, comes from some
young man's pride

Of power to see,—in failure and mis-
take,

Relinquishment, disgrace, on every
side,—

Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried :

VIII

Instances he must—simply recognize ?

Oh, more than so !—must, with a
learner's zeal,

Make doubly prominent, twice em-
phasize,

By added touches that reveal
The god in babe's disguise.

IX

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and
the rest !

Himself the undefeated that shall be :
Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to
test,—

His triumph, in eternity
Too plainly manifest !

X

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith
what the wind

Means in its moaning—by the happy,
prompt,

Instinctive way of youth, I mean ; for
kind

Calm years, exacting their accompt
Of pain, mature the mind :

XI

And some midsummer morning, at the
lull

Just about daybreak, as he looks
across

A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
To the sea's edge for gloom and
gloss,

Next minute must annul,—

XII

Then, when the wind begins among the
vines,

So low, so low, what shall it mean
but this ?

'Here is the change beginning, here
the lines

Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
The limit time assigns'.

XIII

Nothing can be as it has been before ;
Better, so call it, only not the same.

To draw one beauty into our hearts'
core,

And keep it changeless ! such our
claim ;

So answered,—Never more !

XIV

Simple ? Why this is the old woe
o' the world ;

Tune, to whose rise and fall we live
and die.

Rise with it, then ! Rejoice that man
is hurled

From change to change unceasingly.
His soul's wings never furled !

XV

That's a new question ; still replies the
fact,

Nothing endures : the wind moans,
saying so ;

We moan in acquiescence : there's life's
pact,

Perhaps probation—do I know ?
God does : endure His act !

XVI

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
On his soul's hands' palms one fair,
good, wise thing

Just as he grasped it! For himself,
 death's wave;
 While time first washes—ah, the
 sting!—
 O'er all he'd sink to save.

VII

AMONG THE ROCKS

I

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown
 old earth,
 This autumn morning! How he
 sets his bones
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out
 knees and feet
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
 Listening the while, where on the
 heap of stones
 The white breast of the sea-lark twitters
 sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient,
 true;
 Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles
 and knows.
 If you loved only what were worth your
 love,
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well
 for you:
 Make the low nature better by your
 throes!
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain
 above!

VIII

BESIDE THE DRAWING-BOARD

I

'As like as a Hand to another Hand:'
 Whoever said that foolish thing,
 Could not have studied to understand
 The counsels of God in fashioning,
 Out of the infinite love of His heart,
 This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart
 From the world of wonder left to praise,
 If I tried to learn the other ways
 Of love, in its skill, or love, in its power.
 'As like as a Hand to another Hand:'

Who said that, never took his stand,
 Found and followed, like me, an hour,
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
 To fear, almost,—of the limit-line!
 As I looked at this, and learned and
 drew.

Drew and learned, and looked again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Its beauty mounted into my brain,
 And a fancy seized me; I was fain
 To efface my work, begin anew,
 Kiss what before I only drew;
 Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
 With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
 I kissed all right where the drawing
 ailed,
 Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
 Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

II

Go, little girl, with the poor coarse
 hand!
 I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX

ON DECK

I

There is nothing to remember in me,
 Nothing I ever said with a grace,
 Nothing I did that you cared to see,
 Nothing I was that deserves a place
 In your mind, now I leave you, set you
 free.

II

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
 Such things have been as a mutual
 flame.
 Your soul's locked fast; but, love for
 a key,
 You might let it loose, till I grew the
 same
 In your eyes, as in mine you stand:
 strange plea!

III

For then, then, what would it matter
 to me
 That I was the harsh, ill-favoured
 one?

We both should be like as pea and pea ;
It was ever so since the world begun :
So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV

How strange it were if you had all me,
As I have all you in my heart and
brain,
You, whose least word brought gloom
or glee,
Who never lifted the hand in vain
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea !

V

Strange, if a face, when you thought
of me,
Rose like your own face present now,
With eyes as dear in their due degree,
Much such a mouth, and as bright
a brow,
Till you saw yourself, while you cried
' 'Tis She ! '

VI

Well, you may, or you must, set down
to me
Love that was life, life that was love ;
A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
A passion to stand as your thoughts
approve,
A rapture to fall where your foot might
be.

VII

But did one touch of such love for me
Come in a word or a look of yours,
Whose words and looks will, circling,
flee
Round me and round while life
endures,—
Could I fancy 'As I feel, thus feels He ; '

VIII

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
And your hair grow these coarse hanks
of hair,
And your skin, this bark of a gnarled
tree,—
You might turn myself ; should I
know or care,
When I should be dead of joy, James
Lee ?

GOLD HAIR :

A STORY OF PORNIC

I

Oh, the beautiful girl, too white,
Who lived at Pornic, down by the sea,
Just where the sea and the Loire unite !
And a boasted name in Brittany
She bore, which I will not write.

II

Too white, for the flower of life is red ;
Her flesh was the soft, seraphic screen
Of a soul that is meant (her parents said)
To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
And blossom in Heaven instead.

III

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair !
One grace that grew to its full on
earth :
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so
sparse,
And her waist want half a girdle's
girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

IV

Hair, such a wonder of flax and floss,
Freshness and fragrance—floods of
it, too !
Gold, did I say ? Nay, gold's mere
dross :
Here, Life smiled, 'Think what I
meant to do !'
And Love sighed, 'Fancy my loss !'

V

So, when she died, it was scarce more
strange
Than that, when some delicate even-
ing dies,
And you follow its spent sun's pallid
range,
There's a shoot of colour startles the
skies
With sudden, violent change,—

VI

That, while the breath was nearly to
seek,
As they put the little cross to her lips,

She changed ; a spot came out on her
cheek,

A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
And she broke forth, 'I must speak !'

VII

'Not my hair !' made the girl her
moan—

'All the rest is gone or to go ;
But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
Let it stay in the grave, that the
ghosts may know !

Leave my poor gold hair alone !'

VIII

The passion thus vented, dead lay she ;
Her parents sobbed their worst on
that,

All friends joined in, nor observed
degreed :

For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
As it spread—not flowing free,

IX

But curled around her brow, like a
crown,

And coiled beside her cheeks, like
a cap,

And calmed about her neck—ay, down
To her breast, pressed flat, without
a gap

I' the gold, it reached her gown.

X

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed
its hair ;

E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,
As he planted the crucifix with care
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

XI

And thus was she buried, inviolate
Of body and soul, in the very space
By the altar ; keeping saintly state

In Pornic church, for her pride of race,
Pure life, and piteous fate.

XII

And in after-time would your fresh tear
fall,

Though your mouth might twitch
with a dubious smile,

As they told you of gold both robe and
pall,

How she prayed them leave it alone
awhile,

So it never was touched at all.

XIII

Years flew ; this legend grew at last
The life of the lady ; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
Of lover and friend, was summed in
one

Sentence survivors passed :

XIV

To wit, she was meant for Heaven,
not earth ;

Had turned an angel before the
time :

Yet, since she was mortal, in such
dearth

Of frailty, all you could count a
crime

Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

XV

At little pleasant Pornic church,
It chanced, the pavement wanted
repair,

Was taken to pieces : left in the church,
A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

XVI

'Twas the space where our sires would
lay a saint,

A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments
quaint,

A dame with chased ring and jewelled
rose,

Things sanctity saves from taint ;

XVII

So we come to find them in after-days
When the corpse is presumed to have
done with gauds

Of use to the living, in many ways :
For the boys get pelf, and the town
applauds,

And the church deserves the praise.

XVIII

They grubbed with a will : and at length
—*O cor*

Humanum, pectora caeca, and the
rest !—

They found—no gauds they were prying
for,

No ring, no rose, but—who would
have guessed ?—

A double Louis-d'or !

XIX

Here was a case for the priest : he heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid

Finger on nose, smiled, 'A little bird
Chirps in my ear' : then, 'Bring a

spade,'—he gave the word.
Dig deeper !'—

XX

And lo, when they came to the coffin-
lid,

Or the rotten planks which composed
it once.

Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged
amid

A mint of money, it served for the
nonce

To hold in its hair-heaps hid !

XXI

Hid there ? Why ? Could the girl be
'wont

(She, the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and Heaven's
affront ?

Had a spider found out the com-
munion-cup,

Was a toad in the christening-font ?

XXII

Truth is truth : too true it was.

Gold ! She hoarded and hugged it
first,

Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it—
alas—

Till the humour grew to a head and
burst,

And she cried, at the final pass,—

XXIII

'Talk not of God, my heart is stone !
Nor lover nor friend—be gold for
both !

Gold I lack ; and, my all, my own.

It shall hide in my hair. I scarce
die loth,

If they let my hair alone !'

XXIV

Louis-d'ors, some six times five,

And duly double, every piece.

Now, do you see ? With the priest to
shrive,

With parents preventing her soul's
release

By kisses that kept alive,—

XXV

With Heaven's gold gates about to ope,

With friends' praise, gold-like, lin-
gering still,

An instinct had bidden the girl's hand
grobe

For gold, the true sort—'Gold in
Heaven, if you will ;

But I keep earth's too, I hope.'

XXVI

Enough ! The priest took the grave's
grim yield :

The parents, they eyed that price of
sin

As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed

On the place to *bury strangers in*,

The hideous Potter's Field.

XXVII

But the priest bethought him : " Milk
that's spilt "

—You know the adage ! Watch and
pray !

Saints tumble to earth with so slight a
tilt !

It would build a new altar ; that,
we may !'

And the altar therewith was built.

XXVIII

Why I deliver this horrible verse ?

As the text of a sermon, which now
I preach :

Evil or good may be better or worse

In the human heart, but the mixture
of each

Is a marvel and a curse.

XXIX

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false,
I find ;
For our Es-says-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight :

XXX

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons ; this, to
begin :
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank
her dart
At the head of a lie—taught Original
Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE WORST OF IT

I

WOULD it were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are
all :
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide ; not you, the
pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first flock's
fall
On her wonder of white must unswan,
undo !

II

I had dipped in life's struggle, and out
again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to
see,
When I found my swan and the cure
was plain ;
The dull turned bright as I caught
your white
On my bosom : you saved me—saved
in vain
If you ruined yourself, and all
through me !

III

Yes, all through the speckled beast
that I am,
Who taught you to stoop ; you gave
me yourself,

And bound your soul by the vows that
damn :
Since on better thought you break,
as you ought,
Vows—words, no angel set down, some
elf
Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram !

IV

Yes, might I judge you, here were my
heart,
And a hundred its like, to treat as you
pleased !
I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or
make ;
If I acquiesce, why should you be teased
With the conscience-prick and the
memory-smart ?

V

But what will God say ? Oh, my sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this
thing !
Though earth were unworthy to feel
your feet,
There's a Heaven above may deserve
your love :
Should you forfeit Heaven for a snapt
gold ring
And a promise broke, were it just or
meet ?

VI

And I to have tempted you ! I, who
tried
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank !
Unwise,
I loved, and was lowly, loved and
aspired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made
you mad,
And you meant to have hated and
despised—
Whereas, you deceived me nor in-
quired !

VII

She, ruined ? How ? No Heaven for her ?
Crowns to give, and none for the brow
That looked like marble and smelt like
myrrh ?
Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-
branch borne,

And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves aver?

VIII

Hardly! That must be understood!
The earth is your place of penance,
then;

And what will it prove? I desire your
good,

But, plot as I may, I can find no way
How a blow should fall, such as falls on
men,

Nor prove too much for your woman-
hood.

IX

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life,
When you walk alone, and review the
past;

And I, who so long shall have done with
strife,

And journeyed my stage, and earned
my wage,

'And retired as was right,—I am called
at last

When the devil stabs you, to lend the
knife.

X

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,
The happy, that lasted my whole life
'long:

For a promise broke, not for first
words spoke,

The true, the only, that turn my grave
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

XI

Witness beforehand! Off I trip
On a safe path gay through the flowers
you flung:

My very name made great by your lip,
And my heart a-glow with the good
I know

Of a perfect year when we both were
young,

And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

XII

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but
wait!

I spy the loop whence an arrow
shoots!

It may be for yourself, when you
meditate,

That you grieve—for slain ruth,
murdered truth:

'Though falsehood escape in the end,
what boots?

How truth would have triumphed!
—you sigh too late.

XIII

Ay, who would have triumphed like you,
I say!

Well, it is lost now; well, you must
bear,

Abide and grow fit for a better day:
You should hardly grudge, could I
be your judge!

But hush! For you, can be no despair:
There 's amends: 'tis a secret: hope
and pray!

XIV

For I was true at least—oh, true enough!
And, dear, truth is not as good as it
seems!

Commend me to conscience! Idle
stuff!

Much help is in mine, as I mope and
pinc,

And skulk through day, and scowl in
my dreams

At my swan's obtaining the crow's
rebuff.

XV

Men tell me of truth now—'False!

I cry:
Of beauty—'A mask, friend! Look
beneath!'

We take our own method, the devil
and I,

With pleasant and fair and wise and
rare:

And the best we wish to what lives, is
—death;

Which even in wishing, perhaps we
lie!

XVI

Far better commit a fault and have
done—

As you, dear!—for ever; and choose
the pure,

And look where the healing waters run,
And strive and strain to be good again,
And a place in the other world ensure,
All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

XVII

Misery ! What shall I say or do ?
I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade :
Most like, you are glad you deceived
me—rue
No whit of the wrong : you endured
too long,
Have done no evil and want no aid,
Will live the old life out and chance
the new.

XVIII

And your sentence is written all the
same,
And I can do nothing,—pray, per-
haps :
But somehow the world pursues its
game,
If I pray, if I curse,—for better or
worse :
And my faith is torn to a thousand
scraps,
And my heart feels ice while my
words breathe flame.

XIX

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
Are you still so fair ? Have you
still the eyes ?
Be happy ! Add but the other grace,
Be good ! Why want what the
angels vaunt ?
I knew you once : but in Paradise,
If we meet, I will pass nor turn my
face.

DIS ALITER VISUM ;

OR

LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS

I

Stop, let me have the truth of that !
Is that all true ? I say, the day
Ten years ago when both of us
Met on a morning, friends—as thus
We meet this evening, friends or
what ?—

II

Did you—because I took your arm
And sillily smiled, ‘ A mass of brass
That sea looks, blazing underneath ! ’
While up the cliff-road edged with
heat¹,
We took the turns nor came to harm—

III

Did you consider ‘ Now makes twice
That I have seen her, walked and
talked
With this poor pretty thoughtful thing,
Whose worth I weigh : she tries to
sing ;
Draws, hopes in time the eye grows nice ;

IV

‘ Reads verse and thinks she under-
stands ;
Loves all, at any rate, that’s great,
Good, beautiful ; but much as we
Down at the Bath-house love the sea,
Who breathe its salt and bruise its
sands :

V

‘ While . . do but follow the fishing-gull
That flaps and floats from wave to
cave !
There’s the sea-lover, fair my friend !
What then ? Be patient, mark and
mend !
Had you the making of your skull ? ’

VI

And did you, when we faced the church
With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
From human fellowship so far,
Where a few graveyard crosses are,
And garlands for the swallows’ perch,—

VII

Did you determine, as we stepped
O’er the lone stone fence, ‘ Let me get
Her for myself, and what’s the earth
With all its art, verse, music, worth—
Compared with love, found, gained, and
kept ?

VIII

‘ Schumann’s our music-maker now ;
Has his march-movement youth and
mouth ?

Ingres's the modern man that paints ;
Which will lean on me, of his saints ?
Heine for songs ; for kisses, how ?

IX

And did you, when we entered, reached
The votive frigate, soft aloft
Riding on air this hundred years,
Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears,—
Did you draw profit while she preached ?

X

Resolving 'Fools we wise men grow !
Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
Some question that might find reply
As prompt in her stopped lips,
Dropped eye,
And rush of red to cheek and brow :

XI

'Thus were a match made, sure and fast,
'Mid the blue weed-flowers round the
mound
Where, issuing, we shall stand and stay
For one more look at Baths and bay,
Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church
last—

XII

'A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged, and
lamed,
Famous, however, for verse and worse,
Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
When gout and glory seat me there,
So, one whose love-freaks pass un-
blamed,—

XIII

'And this young beauty, round and
sound
As a mountain-apple, youth and truth
With loves and doves, at all events
With money in the Three per Cents ;
Whose choice of me would seem pro-
found :—

XIV

'She might take me as I take her.
Perfect the hour would pass, alas !
Climb high, love high, what matter ?
Still,
Feet, feelings, must descend the hill :
An hour's perfection can't recur. •

XV

'Then follows Paris and full time
For both to reason : "Thus with
us !"
She'll sigh, "Thus girls give body and
soul
At first word, think they gain the
goal.
When 'tis the starting-place they climb !

XVI

"My friend makes verse and gets
renown ;
Have they all fifty years, his peers ?
He knows the world, firm, quiet, and
gay
Boys will become as much one day :
They're fools ; he cheats, with beard
less brown.

XVII

"For boys say, *Love me or I die !*
He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
I want, who am old and know too much ;
I'd catch youth : lend me sight and
touch !
Drop heart's blood where life's wheels
grate dry !"

XVIII

'While I should make rejoinder'—(then
It was, no doubt, you ceased that least
Light pressure of my arm in yours)
'"I can conceive of cheaper cures
For a yawning-fit o'er books and men.

XIX

"What ? All I am, was, and might
be,
All, books taught, art brought, life's
whole strife,
Painful results since precious, just
Were fitly exchanged in wise disgust
For two cheeks freshened by youth and
sea ?

XX

"All for a nosegay !—what came first ;
With fields on flower, untried each
side ;
I rally, need my books and men,
And find a nosegay : drop it, then,
No match yet made for best or worst !"

XXI

That ended me. You judged the porch
We left by, Norman; took our look
At sea and sky; wondered so few
Find out the place for air and view;
Remarked the sun began to scorch;

XXII

Descended, soon regained the Baths,
And then, good-bye! Years ten since
then:

Ten years! We meet: you tell me,
now,

By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

XXIII

Now I may speak: you fool, for all
Your lore! Who made things plain
in vain?

What was the sea for? What, the grey
Sad church, that solitary day,
Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

XXIV

Was there nought better than to enjoy?
No feat which, done, would make
time break,

And let us pent-up creatures through
Into eternity, our due?

No forcing earth teach Heaven's
employ?

XXV

No wise beginning, here and now.

What cannot grow complete (earth's
feat)

And Heaven must finish, there and
then?

No tasting earth's true food for men,
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

XXVI

No grasping at love, gaining a share
Of the sole spark from God's life at
strife

With death, so, sure of range above
The limits here? For us and love,
Failure; but, when God fails, despair.

XXVII

This you call wisdom? Thus you add
Good unto good again, in vain?

You loved, with body worn and weak;
I loved, with faculties to seek:
Were both loves worthless since ill-clad?

XXVIII

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
Man, found with either in default.

XXIX

But what's whole, can increase no more,
Is dwarfed and dies, since here's its
sphere.

The devil laughed at you in his sleeve!
You knew not? That, I well believe;
Or you had saved two souls: nay, four.

XXX

For Stephanie sprained last night her
wrist,
Ankle, or something. 'Pooh,' cry
you?

At any rate she danced, all say,
Vilely: her vogue has had its day.
Here comes my husband from his whist.

TOO LATE

I

HERE was I with my arm and heart
And brain, all yours for a word, a
want

Put into a look—just a look, your
part,—

While mine, to repay it . . . vainest
vaunt,

Were the woman, that's dead, alive
to hear,

Had her lover, that's lost, love's
proof to show!

But I cannot show it; you cannot speak
From the churchyard neither, miles
removed,

Though I feel by a pulse within my
cheek,

Which stabs and stops, that the
woman I loved

Needs help in her grave and finds none
near,

Wants warmth from the heart which
sends it—so!

II

Did I speak once angrily, all the drear days

You lived, you woman I loved so well,
Who married the other? Blame or praise,

Where was the use then? Time would tell,

And the end declare what man for you,
What woman for me was the choice of God.

But, Edith dead! no doubting more!
I used to sit and look at my life
As it rippled and ran till, right before,
A great stone stopped it: oh, the strife

Of waves at that stone some devil threw
In my life's midcurrent, thwarting God!

III

But either I thought, 'They may churn and chide

Awhile, my waves which came for their joy

And found this horrible stone full-tide:
Yet I see just a thread escape, deploy
Through the evening-country, silent and safe,

And it suffers no more till it finds the sea.'

Or else I would think, 'Perhaps some night

When new things happen, a meteor-ball

May slip through the sky in a line of light,

And earth breathe hard, and land-marks fall,

And my waves no longer champ nor chafe,

Since a stone will have been rolled from its place: let be!'

IV

But, dead! All's done with: wait who may,

Watch and wear and wonder who will.
Oh, my whole life that ends to-day!

Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding still,
'The woman is dead, that was none of his;

And the man, that was none of hers,
may go!'

There's only the past left: worry that!
'Wreak, like a bull, on the empty coat,
Rage, its late wearer is laughing at!

Tear the collar to rags, having missed his throat;

Strike stupidly on—'This, this and this,
Where I would that a bosom received the blow!'

V

I ought to have done more: once my speech,

And once your answer, and there, the end,

And Edith was henceforth out of reach!
Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in the face.

Why, better even have burst like a thief
And borne you away to a rock for us two

In a moment's horror, bright, bloody and brief,

Then changed to myself again—'I slew

Myself in that moment; a ruffian lies
Somewhere: your slave, see, born in his place!'

VI

What did the other do? You be judge!
Look at us, Edith! Here are we both!

Give him his six whole years: I grudge
None of the life with you, nay, I loathe
Myself that I grudged his start in advance

Of me who could overtake and pass.
But, as if he loved you! No, not he,
Nor anyone else in the world, 'tis plain:

Who ever heard that another, free
As I, young, prosperous, sound and sane,

Poured life out, proffered it—'Half a glance

Of those eyes of yours and I drop the glass!'

VII

Handsome, were you? 'Tis more than they held,

More than they said; I was 'ware and watched:

The soul that served me, till it task
 once more
 What ashes of my brain have kept their
 shape,
 And these make effort on the last o' the
 flesh,
 Trying to taste again the truth of
 things—
 (He smiled)—'their very superficial
 truth;
 As that ye are my sons, that it is long
 Since James and Peter had release by
 death,
 And I am only he, your brother John,
 Who saw and heard, and could remem-
 ber all.
 Remember all ! It is not much to say.
 What if the truth broke on me from
 above
 As once and oft-times ? Such might
 hap again :
 Doubtless He might stand in presence
 here,
 With head wool-white, eyes flame, and
 feet like brass,
 The sword and the seven stars, as I
 have seen—
 I who now shudder only and surmise
 "How did your brother bear that sight
 and live ?"
 'If I live yet, it is for good, more love
 Through me to men : be nought but
 ashes here
 That keep awhile my semblance, who
 was John,—
 Still, when they scatter, there is left on
 earth
 No one alive who knew (consider this !)
 —Saw with his eyes and handled with
 his hands
 That which was from the first, the Word
 of Life.
 How will it be when none more saith
 "I saw" ?
 'Such ever was love's way : to rise, it
 stoops.
 Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught,
 was bidden teach,
 I went, for many years, about the world,
 Saying "It was so; so I heard and saw,"
 Speaking as the case asked : and men
 believed.

Afterward came the message to myself
 In Patmos isle ; I was not bidden teach,
 But simply listen, take a book and write,
 Nor set down other than the given word,
 With nothing left to my arbitrament
 To choose or change : I wrote, and men
 believed.

Then, for my time grew brief, no message
 more,

No call to write again, I found a way,
 And, reasoning from my knowledge,
 merely taught

Men should, for love's sake, in love's
 strength, believe ;

Or I would pen a letter to a friend
 And urge the same as friend, nor less
 nor more :

Friends said I reasoned rightly, and
 believed.

But at the last, why, I seemed left alive
 Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,
 To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared
 When there was mid-sea, and the mighty
 things ;

Left to repeat, "I saw, I heard, I knew."
 And go all over the old ground again,
 With Antichrist already in the world,
 And many Antichrists, who answered
 prompt

"Am I not Jasper as thyself art John ?
 Nay, young, whereas through age thou
 mayest forget :

Wherefore, explain, or how shall we
 believe ?"

I never thought to call down fire on
 such,

Or, as in wonderful and early days,
 Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent
 dumb ;

But patient stated much of the Lord's
 life

Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it
 work :

Since much that at the first, in deed
 and word,

Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
 Had grown (or else my soul was grown
 to match,

Fed through such years, familiar with
 such light,

Guarded and guided still to see and
 speak)

Of new significance and fresh result ;

What first were guessed as points, I
now knew stars,
And named them in the Gospel I have
writ.

For men said, "It is getting long ago":
"Where is the promise of His coming?"
—asked

These young ones in their strength, as
loth to wait,
Of me who, when their sires were born,
was old.

I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
Since I was there, and helpful in my
age;

And, in the main, I think such men
believed.

Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
Ye brought me here, and I supposed the
end,

And went to sleep with one thought that,
at least,

Though the whole earth should lie in
wickedness,

We had the truth, might leave the rest
to God.

Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
As I had slidden down and fallen afar,
Past even the presence of my former
self,

Grasping the while for stay at facts
which snap,

Till I am found away from my own
world,

Feeling for foot-hold through a blank
profound,

Along with unborn people in strange
lands,

Who say—I hear said or conceive they
say—

"Was John at all, and did he say he
saw?"

Assure us, ere we ask what he might
see!"

"And how shall I assure them? Can
they share

—They, who have flesh, a veil of youth
and strength

About each spirit, that needs must bide
its time,

Living and learning still as years assist
Which wear the thickness thin, and let
man see—

With me who hardly am withheld at
all,

But shudderingly, scarce a shred be-
tween,

Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
We whom God loves? When pain
ends, gam ends too.

To me, that story—ay, that Life and
Death

Of which I wrote "it was"—to me,
it is;

—Is, here and now: I apprehend
nought else.

Is not God now i' the world His power
first made?

Is not His love at issue still with sin,
Closed with and cast and conquered,
crucified

Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else
around?

Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
To the right hand of the throne—what
is it beside,

When such truth, breaking bounds,
o'erfloods my soul,

And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
See I the need yet transiency of both,
The good and glory consummated
thence?

I saw the Power; I see the Love, once
weak,

Resume the Power: and in this word
"I see",

Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both
That, moving o'er the spirit of man,
unblinds

His eye and bids him look. These are,
I see;

But ye, the children, His beloved ones
too,

Ye need,—as I should use an optic glass
I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i'
the world,

It had been given a crafty smith to
make;

A tube, he turned on objects brought
too close,

Lying confusedly insubordinate
For the unassisted eye to master once:

Look through his tube, at distance now
they lay,

Become succinct, distinct, so small, so clear !
 Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what truth
 I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
 Diminished into clearness, proved a point
 And far away : ye would withdraw your sense
 From out eternity, strain it upon time,
 Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death,
 Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,
 As though a star should open out, all sides,
 And grow the world on you, as it is my world.

‘ For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
 And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
 Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,
 How love might be, hath been indeed, and is ;
 And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
 Such prize despite the envy of the world,
 And, having gained truth, keep truth : that is all.
 But see the double way wherein we are led,
 How the soul learns diversely from the flesh !
 With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,
 And yields mere basement for the soul’s emprise,
 Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,
 And warmth was cherishing and food was choicé
 To every man’s flesh, thousand years ago,
 As now to yours and mine ; the body sprang
 At once to the height, and stayed : but the soul,—no !
 Since sages who, this noontide, meditate
 In Rome or Athens, may descry some point

Of the eternal power, hid yestereve ;
 And as thereby the power’s whole mass extends,
 So much extends the æther floating o’er,
 The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.
 Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these
 Till earth’s work stop and useless time run out,
 So duly, daily, needs provision be
 For keeping the soul’s prowess possible,
 Building new barriers as the old decay,
 Saving us from evasion of life’s proof,
 Putting the question ever, “ Does God love,
 And will ye hold that truth against the world ? ”
 Ye know there needs no second proof with good
 Gained for our flesh from any earthly source :
 We might go freezing, ages,—give us fire,
 Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,
 And guard it safe through every chance, ye know !
 That fable of Prometheus and his theft,
 How mortals gained Jove’s fiery flower, grows old
 (I have been used to hear the pagans own)
 And out of mind ; but fire, how’er its birth,
 Here is it, precious to the sophist now
 Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to scorn,
 As precious to those satyrs of his play,
 Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
 While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
 Once grasped, were this our soul’s gain safe, and sure
 To prosper as the body’s gain is wont,—
 Why, man’s probation would conclude, his earth
 Crumble ; for he both reasons and decides,
 Weighs first, then chooses : will he give up fire
 For gold or purple once he knows its worth ?

Could he give Christ up were His worth
as plain ?

Therefore, I say, to test man, shift the
proofs,

Nor may he grasp that fact like other
fact,

And straightway in his life acknowledge
it,

As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
Sigh ye, "It had been easier once than
now" ?

To give you answer I am left alive ;
Look at me who was present from the
first !

Ye know what things I saw ; then
came a test,

My first, befitting me who so had seen :
" Forsake the Christ thou sawest trans-
figured, Him

Who trod the sea and brought the dead
to life ?

What should wring this from thee ? " —
ye laugh and ask.

What wrung it ? Even a torchlight
and a noise,

The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
And fear of what the Jews might do !

Just that,
And, it is written, " I forsook and fled " :
There was my trial, and it ended
thus.

Ay, but my soul had gained its truth,
could grow :

Another year or two,—what little child,
What tender woman that had seen no
least

Of all my sights, but barely heard them
told,

Who did not clasp the cross with a light
laugh,

Or wrap the burning robe round,
thanking God ?

Well, was truth safe for ever, then ?
Not so.

Already had begun the silent work
Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute
blaze,

Might need love's eye to pierce the
o'erstretched doubt :

Teachers were busy, whispering " All
is true

As the aged ones report ; but youth can
reach

Where age gropes dimly, weak with
stir and strain,

And the full doctrine slumbers till
to-day."

Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear
was found,

A bar to me who touched and handled
truth,

Now proved the glozing of some new
shrewd tongue,

This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their
mates,

Till imminent was the outcry " Save
us Christ ! "

Whereon I stated much of the Lord's
life

Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it
work.

Such work done, as it will be, what
comes next ?

What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
" Was John at all, and did he say he
saw ?

Assure us, ere we ask what he might
see ! "

' Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
And may I help to bear it with you all,
Using my weakness which becomes your
strength ?

For if a babe were born inside this grot,
Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the
sun,

Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's
place,—

One loving him and wishful he should
learn,

Would much rejoice himself was blinded
first

Month by month here, so made to
understand

How eyes, born darkling, apprehend
amiss :

I think I could explain to such a child
There was more glow outside than
gleams he caught,

Ay, nor need urge " I saw it, so
believe ! "

It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
In latter days, new lands, or old grown
strange,

Left without me, which must be very
soon

What is the doubt, my brothers?
Quick with it!

I see you stand conversing, each new
face,

Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,
On islets yet unnamed amid the sea;
Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico
Out of the crowd in some enormous town
Where now the larks sing in a solitude;
Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and
sand

Idly conjectured to be Ephesus:
And no one asks his fellow any more
"Where is the promise of His coming?"

but
"Was He revealed in any of His lives,
As Power, as Love, as Influencing
Soul?"

'Quick, for time presses, tell the whole
mind out,

And let us ask and answer and be saved!
My book speaks on, because it cannot
pass;

One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads
"Here is a tale of things done ages
since;

What truth was ever told the second
day?

Wonders, that would prove doctrine,
go for nought.

Remains the doctrine, love; well, we
must love,

And what we love most, power and love
in one,

Let us acknowledge on the record here,
Accepting these in Christ: must Christ
then be?

Has He been? Did not we ourselves
make Him?

Our mind receives but what it holds, no
more.

First of the love, then; we acknow-
ledge Christ—

A proof we comprehend His love, a
proof

We had such love already in ourselves,
Knew first what else we should not
recognize.

'Tis mere projection from man's inmost
mind,

And, what he loves, thus falls reflected
back,

Becomes accounted somewhat out of
him;

He throws it up in air, it drops down
earth's,

With shape, name, story added, man's
old way.

How prove you Christ came otherwise
at least?

Next try the power: He made and
rules the world:

Certes there is a world once made, now
ruled,

Unless things have been ever as we
see.

Our sires declared a charioteer's yoked
steeds

Brought the sun up the east and down
the west,

Which only of itself now rises, sets,
As if a hand impelled it and a will,

Thus they long thought, they who had
will and hands:

But the new question's whisper is
distinct,

Wherefore must all force needs be
like ourselves?

We have the hands, the will; what
made and drives

The sun is force, is law, is named, not
known,

While will and love we do know; marks
of these,

Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—
As that, to punish or reward our race,

The sun at undue times arose or set
Or else stood still: what do not men

affirm?

But earth requires as urgently reward
Or punishment to-day as years ago,

And none expects the sun will interpose:
Therefore it was mere passion and mis-
take,

Or erring zeal for right, which changed
the truth.

Go back, far, farther, to the birth of
things;

Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
Man's!—which he gives, supposing he

but finds,
As late he gave head, body, hands and
feet,

To help these in what forms he called
his gods.

First, Jove's brow, Juno's eyes were swept away,
 But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long ;
 As last, will, power, and love discarded these,
 So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
 What proveth God is otherwise at least?
 All else, projection from the mind of man ! ”

‘ Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
 But place my gospel where I put my hands.

‘ I say that man was made to grow, not stop ;
 That help, he needed once, and needs no more,

Having grown up but an inch by, is withdrawn :
 For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.

This imports solely, man should mount on each

New height in view ; the help whereby he mounts,

The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,

Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.

Man apprehends Him newly at each stage

Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done ;

And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.

You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs

To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,

And check the careless step would spoil their birth ;

But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,

Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds,

It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
 Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,

But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,

For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
 Nor miracles need prove it any more.
 Doth the fruit show ? Then miracles bade 'ware

At first of root and stem, saved both till now

From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.

What ? Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,

And be discharged, and straight wound up anew ?

No !—grown, his growth lasts ; taught, he ne'er forgets :

May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.

‘ This might be pagan teaching : now hear mine.

‘ I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,

Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
 So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth :

When they can eat, babe's nurture is withdrawn.

I fed the babe whether it would or no :
 I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.

I cried once, “ That ye may believe in Christ,

Behold this blind man shall receive his sight ! ”

I cry now, “ Urgest thou, for I am shrewd

And smile at stories how John's word could cure—

Repeat that miracle and take my faith ? ”

I say, that miracle was duly wrought
 When, save for it, no faith was possible.

Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,

Whether the change came from our minds which see

Of the shows o' the world so much as and no more

Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I

See now, suppose you, there where you see rock

Round us ?)—I know not ; such was the effect,

So faith grew, making void more
miracles

Because too much : they would compel,
not help.

I say, the acknowledgment of God in
Christ

Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.

Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove
the proved ?

In life's mere minute, with power to use
that proof,

Leave knowledge and revert to how it
sprung ?

Thou hast it ; use it and forthwith, or
die !

' For I say, this is death and the sole
death,

When a man's loss comes to him from
his gain,

Darkness from light, from knowledge
ignorance,

And lack of love from love made mani-
fest ;

A lamp's death when, replete with oil,
it chokes ;

A stomach's when, surcharged with
food, it starves.

With ignorance was surety of a cure.
When man, appalled at nature, ques-
tioned first

" What if there lurk a might behind
this might ? "

He needed satisfaction God could give,
And did give, as ye have the written

word :

But when he finds might still redouble
might,

Yet asks, " Since all is might, what use
of will ? "

—Will, the one source of might,—he
being man

With a man's will and a man's might,
to teach

In little how the two combine in large,—
That man has turned round on himself

and stands,
Which in the course of nature is, to die.

' And when man questioned, " What if
there be love

Behind the will and might, as real as
they ? "—

He needed satisfaction God could give,
And did give, as ye have the written
word :

But when, beholding that love every-
where,

He reasons, " Since such love is every-
where,

And since ourselves can love and would
be loved,

We ourselves make the love, and Christ
was not,"—

How shall ye help this man who knows
himself,

That he must love and would be loved
again,

Yet, owning his own love that proveth
Christ,

Rejecteth Christ through very need of
Him ?

The lamp o'erswims with oil, the
stomach flags

Loaded with nurture, and that man's
soul dies.

' If he rejoice, " But this was all the
while

A trick ; the fault was, first of all, in
thee,

Thy story of the places, names and
dates,

Where, when and how the ultimate
truth had rise,

—Thy prior truth, at last discovered
none,

Whence now the second suffers detri-
ment.

What good of giving knowledge if,
because

Of the manner of the gift, its profit fail ?
And why refuse what modicum of help

Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
I' the face of truth—truth absolute,

uniform ?

Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,

And not ask of thee and have answer
prompt,

Was this once, was it not once ?—then
and now

And evermore, plain truth from man to
man.

Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's ?

Put question of his famous play again
How for the ephemerals' sake, Jove's
fire was filched,

And carried in a cane and brought to
earth :

*The fact is in the fable, cry the wise,
Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,
Though fire be spirit and produced on
earth.*

As with the Titan's, so now with thy
tale :

Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
Nor tell the whole truth in the proper
words ? "

' I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
The very primal thesis, plainest law,
—Man is not God but hath God's end
to serve,

A master to obey, a course to take,
—Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to
become ?

Grant this, then man must pass from
old to new,

From vain to real, from mistake to
fact,

From what once seemed good, to what
now proves best.

How could man have progression other-
wise ?

Before the point was mooted " What is
God ? "

No savage man inquired " What am
myself ? "

Much less replied, " First, last, and best
of things."

Man takes that title now if he believes
Might can exist with neither will nor
love,

In God's case—what he names now
Nature's Law—

While in himself he recognizes love
No less than might and will: and
rightly takes.

Since if man prove the sole existent
thing

Where these combine, whatever their
degree,

However weak the might or will or love,
So they be found there, put in evidence,
He is as surely higher in the scale,

Than any might with neither love nor
will,

As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess
its wing,

Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self :
I give such to the midge for resting-
place !

Thus, man proves best and highest—
God, in fine,

And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
The gain to loss, best rise to the worst
fall,

His life becomes impossible, which is
death.

' But if, appealing thence, he cower,
avouch

He is mere man, and in humility
Neither may know God nor mistake
himself ;

I point to the immediate consequence
And say, by such confession straight he
falls

Into man's place, a thing nor God nor
beast,

Made to know that he can know and
not more :

Lower than God who knows all and
can all,

Higher than beasts which know and can
so far

As each beast's limit, perfect to an
end,

Nor conscious that they know, nor
craving more ;

While man knows partly but conceives
beside,

Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
And in this striving, this converting air
Into a solid he may grasp and use,

Finds progress, man's distinctive mark
alone,

Not God's, and not the beasts' : God is,
they are,

Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
Such progress could no more attend
his soul

Were all it struggles after found at first
And guesses changed to knowledge
absolute,

Than motion wait his body, were all else
Than it the solid earth on every side,

Where now through space he moves
from rest to rest.

Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must
expect

He could not, what he knows now, know
at first ;

What he considers that he knows today,
Come but to-morrow, he will find mis-
known ;

Getting increase of knowledge, since
he learns

Because he lives, which is to be a man,
Set to instruct himself by his past self :
First, like the brute, obliged by facts
to learn,

Next, as man may, obliged by his own
mind,

Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned
to law.

God's gift was that man should conceive
of truth

And yearn to gain it, catching at mis-
take,

As midway help till he reach fact indeed.
The statuary ere he mould a shape
Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and
next

The aspiration to produce the same ;
So, taking clay, he calls his shape
thereout,

Cries ever " Now I have the thing I
see " :

Yet all the while goes changing what
was wrought,

From falsehood like the truth, to truth
itself.

How were it had he cried " I see no
face,

No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual
clay ? "

Rather commend him that he clapped
his hands,

And laughed " It is my shape and lives
again ! "

Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on
to truth,

Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed
In what is still flesh-imitating clay.

Right in you, right in him, such way
be man's !

God only makes the live shape at a jet.
Will ye renounce this pact of creature-
ship ?

The pattern on the Mount subsists no
more,

Seemed awhile, then returned to no-
thingness ;

But copies, Moses strove to make
thereby,

Serve still and are replaced as time
requires :

By these, make newest vessels, reach
the type !

If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law,
Indulging every instinct of the soul
There where law, life, joy, impulse are
one thing !

' Such is the burthen of the latest time.
I have survived to hear it with my ears,
Answer it with my lips : does this
suffice ?

For if there be a further woe than such,
Wherein my brothers struggling need
a hand,

So long as any pulse is left in mine,
May I be absent even longer yet,
Plucking the blind ones back from the
abyss,

Though I should tarry a new hundred
years ! '

But he was dead : 'twas about noon,
the day

Somewhat declining : we five buried
him

That eve, and then, dividing, went five
ways,

And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled
with sand.

Valens is lost, I know not of his trace ;
The Bactrian was but a wild, childish
man,

And could not write nor speak, but only
loved :

So, lest the memory of this go quite,
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,
I tell the same to Phrebas, whom
believe !

For many look again to find that face,
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
Somewhere in life about the world ;

they err :

Either mistaking what was darkly spoke
At ending of his book, as he relates,
Or misconceiving somewhat of this
speech

Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I
suppose.

Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine re-
gard !

For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast
with God.

[Cerinthus read and mused ; one added
this :

' If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
Mere man, the first and best but nothing
more,—

Account Him, for reward of what He
was,

Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.
For see ; Himself conceived of life as
love,

Conceived of love as what must enter in,
Fill up, make one with His each soul
He loved :

Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy
for Him.

Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit
reward.

But by this time are many souls set free,
And very many still retained alive :

Nay, should His coming be delayed
awhile,

Say, ten years longer (twelve years,
some compute)

See if, for every finger of thy hands,
There be not found, that day the world
shall end,

Hundreds of souls, each holding by
Christ's word

That He will grow incorporate with all,
With me as Pamphylax, with him as
John,

Groom for each bride ! Can a mere
man do this ?

Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died
to do.

Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
Or lost !

But 'twas Cerinthus that is lost.]

' CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS ;

OR,

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

' THOU THOUGHTTEST THAT I WAS
ALTOGETHER SUCH AN ONE AS
THYSELF '

[WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day
is best,

Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop
his chin ;

And, while he kicks both feet in the
cool slush,

And feels about his spine small eft-
things course,

Run in and out each arm, and make
him laugh ;

And while above his head a pompion-
plant,

Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair
and beard,

And now a flower drops with a bee
inside,

And now a fruit to snap at, catch and
crunch :

He looks out o'er yon sea which sun-
beams cross

And recross till they weave a spider-
web

(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks
at times),

And talks to his own self, howe'er he
please,

Touching that other, whom his dam
called God.

Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know ! and time to vex
is now,

When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep

In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and
gibe,

Letting the rank tongue blossom into
speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos !
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o'
the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun
to match,
But not the stars; the stars came
otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such
as that:
Also this isle, what lives and grows
thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends
the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His
cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy
fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream
where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm
brine
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far
amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls
of wave;
Only she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her
life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred
o' the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not
born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her
despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so
He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun,
this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and
creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a
leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger
brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant
white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the
long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a
worm,
And says a plain word when she finds
her prize.

But will not eat the ants; the ants
themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled
stalks
About their hole—He made all these
and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite: how
else?
He could not, Himself, make a second
self
To be His mate; as well have made
Himself.
He would not make what He dislikes
or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His
pains:
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a
manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a
few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all
the while,
Things He admires and mocks too,—
that is it.
Because, so brave, so better though
they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague:
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into
mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have
perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill
and kiss,—
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink
up all,
Quick, quick, tall maggots scamper
through my brain;
And throw me on my back i' the seeded
thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my
Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath
wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to
admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the
horns

Of grigs high up that make the merry
 din,
 Saucy through their veined wings, and
 mind me not.
 In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle
 clay,
 And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should
 laugh;
 And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
 Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
 Bid his poor leg smart less or grow
 again,—
 Well, as the chance were, this might
 take or else
 Not take my fancy: I might hear his
 cry,
 And give the manikin three legs for his
 one,
 Or pluck the other off, leave him like
 an egg,
 And lessoned he was mine and merely
 clay.
 Were this no pleasure, lying in the
 thyme,
 Drinking the mash, with brain become
 alive,
 Making and marring clay at will? So
 He.
 'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor
 wrong in Him,
 Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and
 Lord.
 'Am strong myself compared to yonder
 crabs
 That march now from the mountain to
 the sea;
 'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-
 first,
 Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
 'Say, the first straggler that boasts
 purple spots
 Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
 'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive
 a worm,
 And two worms he whose nippers end
 in red;
 As it likes me each time, I do: so He.
 Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the
 main,
 Placable if His mind and ways were
 guessed.

But rougher than His handiwork, be
 sure!
 Oh, He hath made things worthier than
 Himself,
 And envieth that, so helped, such things
 do more
 That. He who made them! What con-
 soles but this?
 That they, unless through Him, do
 nought at all,
 And must submit: what other use in
 things?
 'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
 That, blown through, gives exact the
 scream o' the jay
 When from her wing you twitch the
 feathers blue:
 Sound this, and little birds that hate
 the jay
 Flock within stone's throw, glad their
 foe is hurt:
 Put case such pipe could prattle and
 boast forsooth
 'I catch the birds, I am the crafty
 thing,
 I make the cry my maker cannot make
 With his great round mouth; he must
 blow through mine!
 Would not I smash it with my foot?
 So He.
 But wherefore rough, why cold and ill
 at ease?
 Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
 What knows,—the something over
 Setebos
 That made Him, or He, may be, found
 and fought,
 Worst,ed, drove off and did to nothing,
 perchance.
 There may be something quiet o'er His
 head,
 Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor
 grief,
 Since both derive from weakness in
 some way.
 I joy because the quails come; would
 not joy
 Could I bring quails here when I have
 a mind:
 This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
 'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its
 couch.

But never spends much thought nor
care that way.
It may look up, work up,—the worse
for those
It works on ! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through
what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives He cannot
soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life ;
Next looks down here, and out of very
spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape you
real,
These good things to match those as
hips do grapes.
'Tis solace making baubles, ay, and
sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at
his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle ;
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves,
arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, pro-
digious words ;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a
name ;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's
robe
The eyed skin of a supple oncelot ;
And hath an ounce sleeker than young-
ling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower
and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and
mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my
wife :
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill
crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight
disgorge ;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he
snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought some-
what tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens
the drudge
In a hole o' the rock and calls him
Caliban ;
A bitter heart, that bides its time and
bites,

'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketth his mirth with make-believes :
so He.
His dam held that the Quiet made all
thing:
Which Setebos vexed only : holds
not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness
He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand
was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn
could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against
the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and
joint,
Like an ore's armour ? Ay,—so spoil
His sport !
He is the One now : only He doth all.
'Saith, He may like, perchance, what
profits Him.
Ay, himself loves what does him good ;
but why ?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded
beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his
nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help,
but hate
Or love, just as it liked him : He hath
eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much
craft,
By no means for the love of what is
worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the
world
When all goes right, in this safe summer-
time,
And he wants little, hungers, aches not
much,
Than trying what to do with wit and
strength.
'Falls to make something : 'piled yon
pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares
of soft white chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a
moon on each,

And set up endwise certain spikes of
tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's
skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for
one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole
sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again :
so He.

'Saith He is terrible : watch His feats
in proof !
One hurricane will spoil six good
months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know,
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows
why ?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced
them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-
tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here : well,
one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its
large tongue,
And licked the whole labour flat : so
much for spite.
'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it
lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i'
the shade :
Often they scatter sparkles : there is
force !
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside
a stone.
Please Him and hinder this ?—What
Prosper does ?
Aha, if He would tell me how ! Not He !
There is the sport : discover how or die !
All need not die, for of the things o' the
isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up
trees ;
Those at His mercy,—why, they please
Him most
When . . when . . well, never try the
same way twice !
Repeat what act has pleased, He may
grow wroth.

You must not know His ways, and play
Him off,
Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like him-
self :
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my
thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in
defence :
'Spareth an urchin that, contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach : the two
ways please.
But what would move my choler more
than this,
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days
to come,
Saying forsooth in the inmost of its
heart,
'Because he did so yesterday with me,
And otherwise with such another brute,
So must he do henceforth and always.'
—Ay ?
'Would teach the reasoning couple what
'must' means !
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord ?
So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength :
no change,
If He have done His best, make no new
world
To please Him more, so leave off watch-
ing this,—
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow
into it
As grubs grow butterflies : else, here
are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall
stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted
friends :
Idly ! He doth His worst in this our
life,
Giving just respite lest we die through
pain,

Saving last pain for worst,—with which,
 an end.
 Meanwhile, the best way to escape His
 ire
 Is, not to seem too happy. Sees, him-
 self,
 Yonder two flies, with purple films and
 pink,
 Bask on the pompion-bell above : kills
 both.
 'Sees two black painful beetles roll their
 ball
 On head and tail as if to save their lives :
 Moves them the stick away they strive
 to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive,
 suppose
 This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
 And always, above all else, envies Him.
 Wherefore he mainly dances on dark
 nights,
 Moans in the sun, gets under holes to
 laugh,
 And never speaks his mind save housed
 as now :
 Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught
 me here,
 O'erheard this speech, and asked 'What
 chucklest at ?'
 'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
 Or of my three kid yearlings burn the
 best,
 Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
 Or push my tame beast for the ore to
 taste :
 While myself lit a fire, and made a song
 And sung it, 'What I hate, be consecrate
 To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
 For Thee ; what see for envy in poor me ?'
 Hoping the while, since evils sometimes
 mend,
 Warts rub away, and sores are cured
 with slime,
 That some strange day, will either the
 Quiet catch
 And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
 Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what ? A curtain o'er the
 world at once !
 Crickets stop hissing ; not a bird—or,
 yes,

There scuds His raven that hath told
 Him all !
 It was fool's play, this prattling ! Ha !
 The wind
 Shoulders the pillared dust, death's
 house o' the move,
 And fast invading fires begin ! White
 blaze—
 A tree's head snaps—and there, there,
 there, there, there,
 His thunder follows ! Fool to gibe at
 Him !
 Lo ! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos !
 'Maketh his teeth meet through his
 upper lip,
 Will let those quails fly, will not eat
 this month
 One little mess of wheelks, so he may
 'scape !]

CONFESSIONS

I

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears ?
 'Now that I come to die,
 Do I view the world as a vale of tears ?'
 Ah, reverend sir, not I !

II

What I viewed there once, what I view
 again
 Where the physic bottles stand
 On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
 With a wall to my bedside hand.

III

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
 'From a house you could descry
 O'er the garden-wall : is the curtain blue
 Or green to a healthy eye ?

IV

To mine, it serves for the old June
 weather
 Blue above lane and wall ;
 And that farthest bottle labelled 'Ether'
 Is the house o'er-topping all

V

At a terrace, somewhat near its stopper,
 There watched for me, one June,
 A girl : I know, sir, it's improper,
 My poor mind's out of tune.

VI

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except :
They styled their house 'The Lounge.'

VII

What right had a lounge up their lane ?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes
might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

VIII

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled 'Ether,'
And stole from stair to stair,

IX

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate.
Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet :
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet !

MAY AND DEATH

I

I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful
things ;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-
ends.

III

So, for their sakes, be May still May !
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me : I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng
manifold.

IV

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up
green

Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves
between,—

V

That, they might spare ; a certain
wood
Might miss the plant ; their loss were
small :
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's
all.

PROSPICE

FEAR death ?—to feel the fog in my
throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts
denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the
storm,
The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a
visible form,
Yet the strong man must go :
For the journey is done and the summit
attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the
prize guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my
eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare
like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad
life's arrears—
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to
the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the element's rage, the fiend-voices
that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace,
—then a joy,
Then a light, then thy breast,

O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp
thee again,
And with God be the rest!

YOUTH AND ART

I

It once might have been, once only:
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone sho-bird of his feather.

II

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and
polished,
Then laughed 'They will see some day
Smith made, and Gibson demolished.'

III

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twit-
tered,
'Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
And Grisi's existence embittered!'

IV

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

V

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's
windows.

VI

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard
too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

VII

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence
facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

VIII

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eyes' tail up,
As I shook upon E *in alt*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

IX

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

X

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

XI

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

XII

But I think I gave you as good!
'That foreign fellow,—who can know
How she pays, in a playful mood,
For his tuning her that piano?'

XIII

Could you say so, and never say
'Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
And I fetch her from over the way,
Her, piano, and long tunes and short
tunes?'

XIV

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over:
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

XV

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an
R.A.

XVI

Each life's unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been
happy.

XVII

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever:
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A FACE

If one could have that little head of
hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
No shade encroaching on the matchless
mould
Of those two lips, which should be
opening soft
In the pure profile; not as when she
laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its
staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for
his.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might
surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold
ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it
lifts!
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades
absorb:
But these are only massed there, I
should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momentarily
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against
the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this
sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into
one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should
it wink.

A LIKENESS

SOME people hang portraits up
In a room where they dine or sup:
And the wife clinks tea-things under,
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
Asks, 'Who was the lady, I wonder?'
'Tis a daub John bought at a sale,
Quoth the wife,—looks black as thun-
der:
'What a shado beneath her nose!
Snuff-taking, I suppose,—'
Attds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there's no wife in the case,
But the portrait's queen of the place,
Alone mid the other spoils
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree,
jasmine,
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist ('not, alas!
mine,
But my master's, the Tipton Slasher')
And the cards where pistol-balls mark
ace,
And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
And the chamois-horns ('shot in the
Chablais')
And prints—Rarey drumming on
Cruiser,
And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
And the little edition of Rabelais:
Where a friend, with both hands in his
pockets,
May saunter up close to examine it,
And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb
in it,
But the eyes are half out of their
sockets;
That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
But they've made the girl's nose a
proboscis:
Jane Lamb, that we danced with at
Vichy!
What, is not she Jane? Then, who is
she?'

All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint;
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
Yet a fact (take my conviction)
Because it has more than a hint

Of a certain face, I never
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of.
In women I've seen the face of:
Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
Fifty in one portfolio.
When somebody tries my claret,
We turn round chairs to the fire,
Chirp over days in a garret,
Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
Talk about pencil and lyre,
And the National Portrait Gallery:
Then I exhibit my treasure.
After we've turned over twenty,
And the debt of wonder my crony owes
Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
He stops me—' *Festina lente!*
What's that sweet thing there, the
etching?'

How my waistcoat-strings want stretch-
ing,
How my cheeks grow red as tomatoes,
How my heart leaps! But hearts, after
leaps, ache.

'By the by, you must take, for a keep-
sake,
That other, you praised, of Volpato's.'

The fool! would he try a flight further
and say

He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with,—
why, I'll not engage

But that, half in a rapture and half in
a rage,

I should toss him the thing's self—' 'Tis
only a duplicate,

A thing of no value! Take it, I
supplicate!'

MR. SLUDGE, 'THE MEDIUM'

Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me!
Just this once!

This was the first and only time, I'll
swear,—

Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only
time,

I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the soul
Of Her who hears—(your sainted
mother, sir!)

All, except this last accident, was
truth—

This little kind of slip!—and even this,
It was your own wine, sir, the good
champagne,

(I took it for Catawba,—you're so kind)
Which put the folly in my head!

'Get up?'

You still inflict on me that terrible face?
You show no mercy?—Not for Her
dear sake,

The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath
even now

Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel
something, sir?)

You'll tell?

Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
What such a rowdy chooses to . . .

Aie—aie—aie!

Please, sir! your thumbs are through
my windpipe, sir!
Ch—ch!

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now!
Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
When your departed mother spoke
those words

Of peace through me, and moved you,
sir, so much,

You gave me—(very kind it was of you)
These shirt-studs—(better take them
back again,

Please, sir!)—yes, little did I think so
soon

A trifle of trick, all through a glass too
much

Of his own champagne, would change
my best of friends

Into an angry gentleman!

Though, 'twas wrong.

I don't contest the point; your anger's
just:

Whatever put such folly in my head,
I know 'twas wicked of me. There's
a thick,

Dusk, undeveloped spirit (I've observed)

Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,

Or else an Irish emigrant's; yourself Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,

When we had summoned Franklin to clear up

A point about those shares in the telegraph :

Ay, and he swore . . . or might it be Tom Paine ? . . .

Thumping the table close by where I crouched,

He'd do me soon a mischief ; that's come true !

Why, now your face clears ! I was sure it would !

Then, this one time . . . don't take your hand away,

Through yours I surely kiss your mother's hand . . .

You'll promise to forgive me ?—or, at least,

Tell nobody of this ? Consider, sir ! What harm can mercy do ? Would but the shade

Of the venerable dead—one just vouch-safe

A rap or tip ! What bit of paper 's here ?

Suppose we take a pencil, let her write, Make the least sign, she urges on her child

Forgiveness ? There now ! Eh ? Oh ! 'Twas your foot,

And not a natural creak, sir ?

Answer, then !

Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I'm waiting to say 'thrice !'

All to no use ? No sort of hope for me ? It's all to post to Greeley's newspaper ?

What ? If I told you all about the tricks ?

Upon my soul !—the whole truth, and nought else,

And how there's been some falsehood—for your part,

Will you engage to pay my passage out, And hold your tongue until I'm safe on board ?

England's the place, not Boston—no offence !

I see what makes you hesitate : don't fear !

I mean to change my trade and, cheat no more,

Yes, this time really it's upon my soul ! Be my salvation !—under Heaven, of course.

I'll tell some queer things. Sixty Vs must do.

A trifle, though, to start with ! We'll refer

The question to this table ?

How you're changed !

Then split the difference ; thirty more, we'll say.

Ay, but you leave my presents ! Else I'll swear

'Twas all through those : you wanted yours again,

So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back !

Tread on a worm, it turns, sir ! If I turn,

Your fault ! 'Tis you'll have forced me ! Who's obliged

To give up life yet try no self-defence ? At all events, I'll run the risk. Eh ?

Done !

May I sit, sir ? This dear old table, now !

Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar !

I've been so happy with you ! Nice stuffed chairs,

And sympathetic sideboards ; what an end

To all the instructive evenings ! (It's alight.)

Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said !

Here goes,—but keep your temper, or I'll scream !

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-iddle-ol ! You see, sir, it's your own fault more than mine ;

It's all your fault, you curious gentle-folk !

You're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry,

So clever, while you cling by half a claw
 To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,
 Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch
 Because you chose it, so it must be safe.
 Oh, otherwise you're sharp enough!
 You spy
 Who slips, who slides, who holds by help of wing,
 Wanting real foothold,—who can't keep upright
 On the other perch, your neighbour chose, not you:
 There's no outwitting you respecting him!
 For instance, men love money—that, you know—
 And what men do to gain it: well, suppose
 A poor lad, say a help's son in your house,
 Listening at keyholes, hears the company
 Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so forth,
 How hard they are to get, how good to hold,
 How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in pops he—
 'I've got a V-note!'—what do you say to him?
 What's your first word which follows your last kick?
 'Where did you steal it, rascal?'
 That's because
 He finds you, fain would fool you, off your perch,
 Not on the special piece of nonsense, sir,
 Elected your parade-ground: let him try
 Lies to the end of the list,—'He picked it up,
 His cousin died and left it him by will,
 The President flung it to him, riding by,
 An actress trucked it for a curl of his hair,
 He dreamed of luck and found his shoe enriched,
 He dug up clay, and out of clay made gold'—
 How would you treat such possibilities?

Would not you, prompt, investigate the case
 With cow-hide? 'Lies, lies, lies,' you'd shout: and why?
 Which of the stories might not prove mere truth?
 This last, perhaps, that clay was turned to coin!
 Let's see, now, give him me to speak for him!
 How many of your rare philosophers, In plaguy books I've had to dip into, Believed gold could be made thus, saw it made
 And made it? Oh, with such philosophers
 You're on your best behaviour! While the lad—
 With him, in a trice, you settle likelihoods,
 Nor doubt a moment how he got his prize:
 In his case, you hear, judge and execute, All in a breath: so would most men of sense.
 But let the same lad hear you talk as grand
 At the same keyhole, you and company, Of signs and wonders, the invisible world;
 How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
 More than our vulgarest incredulity;
 How good men have desired to see a ghost,
 What Johnson used to say, what Wesley did,
 *Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-diddle-dee:—
 If he then break in with, 'Sir, I saw a ghost!'
 Ah, the ways change! He finds you perched and prim;
 It's a conceit of yours that ghosts may be:
 There's no talk now of cow-hide. 'Tell it out!
 Don't fear us! Take your time and recollect!
 Sit down first: try a glass of wine, my boy!
 And, David, (is not that your Christian name?)

Of all things, should this happen twice
—it may—

Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let
us know !'

Does the boy blunder, blurt out this,
blab that,

Break down in the other, as beginners
will ?

All's candour, all's considerateness—
'No haste !

Pause and collect yourself ! We under-
stand !

That's the bad memory, or the natural
shock,

Or the unexplained *phenomena* !'

Egad,

The boy takes heart of grace ; finds,
never fear,

The readiest way to ope your own heart
wide,

Show—what I call your peacock-perch,
pet post

To strut, and spread the tail, and
squawk upon !

'Just as you thought, much as you
might expect !

There be more things in heaven and
earth, Horatio, . . .

And so on. Shall not David take the
hint,

Grow bolder, stroke you down at
quickened rate ?

If he ruffle a feather, it's 'Gently,
patiently !

Manifestations are so weak at first !
Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts

all short,

Cures with a vengeance !'

There, sir, that's your style !

You and your boy—such pains bestowed
on him,

Or any headpiece of the average worth,
To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him

apace,

Make him a Person (' Porson ' ? thank
you, sir !)

Much more, proficient in the art of lies.
You never leave the lesson ! Fire alight,

Catch you permitting it to die ! You've
friends ;

There's no withholding knowledge,—
least from those

Apt to look elsewhere for their souls'
'supply :

Why should not you parade your lawful
prize ?

Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
Hits on a first edition,—he hence-

forth

Gives it his name, grows notable : how
much more,

Who ferrets out a 'medium' ? 'David's
yours,

You highly-favoured man ? Then, pity
souls

Less privileged ! Allow us share your
luck !'

So, David holds the circle, rules the
roast,

Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass
ball,

Sets to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
As the case may be.

Now mark ! To be precise—

Though I say, 'lies' all these, at this
first stage,

'Tis just for science' sake : I call such
grubs

By the name of what they'll turn to,
dragonflies.

Strictly, it's what good people style
untruth ;

But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown
thing :

It's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-
work—

What never meant to be so very bad—
The knack of story-telling, brightening

up

Each dull old bit of fact that drops its
shine.

One does see somewhat when one shuts
one's eyes,

If only spots and streaks ; tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves : and

pens, good Lord,

Who knows if you drive them or they
drive you ?

'Tis but a foot in the water and out
again ;

Not that duck-under which decides your
dive.

Note this, for it's important : listen
why.

I'll prove, you push on David till he
 And ends the shivering. Here's your
 circle, now :
 Two-thirds of them, with heads like you
 their host,
 Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you
 expect,
 'Lord, who'd have thought it !' But
 there's always one
 Looks wise, compassionately smiles,
 submits
 'Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
 But—do you feel so certain of that
 boy's ?
 Really, I wonder ! I confess myself
 More chary of my faith !' That's
 galling, sir !
 What, he the investigator, he the sage,
 When all's done ? Then, you just have
 shut your eyes,
 Opened your mouth, and gulped down
 David whole,
 You ! Terrible were such catastrophe !
 So, evidence is redoubled, doubled again,
 And doubled besides ; once more, 'He
 heard, we heard,
 You and they heard, your mother and
 your wife,
 Your children and the stranger in your
 gates :
 Did they or did they not ?' So much,
 for him,
 The black sheep, guest without the
 wedding-garb,
 And doubting Thomas ! Now's your
 turn to crow :
 'He's kind to think you such a fool :
 Sludge cheats ?
 Leave you alone to take precautions !'

Straight

The rest join chorus. Thomas stands
 abashed,
 Sips silent some such beverage as this,
 Considers if it be harder, shutting
 eyes
 And gulping David in good fellowship,
 Than going elsewhere, getting, in ex-
 change,
 With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
 Some just as tough a morsel. Over the
 way,

Holds Captain Sparks his court : is it
 better there ?
 Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-
 scenes,
 And Mexican War exploits to swallow
 plump
 If you'd be free of the stove-side, rock-
 ing-chair,
 And trio of affable daughters ?

Doubt succumbs !

Victory ! All your circle's yours again !
 Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
 David's performance rounds, each chink
 gets patched,
 Every protrusion of a point's filed fine,
 All's fit to set a-rolling round the world,
 And then return to David finally,
 Lies seven-feet-thick about his first
 half-inch.
 Here's a choice birth of the super-
 natu.al,
 Poor David's pledged to ! You've
 employed no tool
 That laws exclaim at, save the devil's
 own,
 Yet screwed him into henceforth gull-
 ing you
 To the top of your bent,—all out of one
 half-lic !

You hold, if there's one half or a
 hundredth part
 Of a lie, that's his fault,—his be the
 penalty !
 I dare say ! You'd prove firmer in his
 place ?
 You'd find the courage,—that first
 flurry over,
 That mild bit of romancing-work at
 end,—
 To interpose with 'It gets serious, this ;
 Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost at
 all.
 Inform your friends I made . . . well,
 fools of them,
 And found you ready made. I've lived
 in clover
 These three weeks : take it out in kicks
 of me !'
 I doubt it ! Ask your conscience !
 Let me know,
 Twelve months hence, with how few
 embellishments

To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped
sorts.

You see, their world's much like a jail
broke loose,

While this of ours remains shut, bolted,
barred,

With a single window to it. Sludge,
our friend,

Serves as this window, whether thin or
thick,

Or stained or stainless; he's the
medium-pane

Through which, to see us and be seen,
they peep:

They crowd each other, hustle for a
chance,

Tread on their neighbour's kibes, play
tricks enough!

Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve
aside?

Up in his place jumps Barnum—"I'm
your man,

I'll answer you for Bacon!" Try once
more!

Or else it's—"What's a "medium"?"
He's a means,

Good, bad, indifferent, still the only
means

Spirits can speak by; he may mis-
conceive,

Stutter and stammer,—he's their
Sludge and drudge,

Take him or leave him; they must hold
their peace,

Or else, put up with having knowledge
strained

To half expression through his ignor-
ance.

Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to
shed

New music he's brimfull of; why, he
turns

The handle of this organ, grinds with
Sludge,

And what he poured in at the mouth
o' the mill

As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy
now!)

Comes from the hopper as bran-new
Sludge, nought else,

The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a
natural F,

Or the "Stars and Stripes" set to
consecutive fourths.'

Sir, where's the scrape you did not
help me through,

You that are wise? And for the fools,
the folk

Who came to see,—the guests, (observe
that word!)

Pray do you find guests criticize your
wine,

Your furniture, your grammar, or your
nose?

Then, why your 'medium'? What's
the difference?

Prove your madeira red-ink and gam-
boge,—

Your Sludge, a cheat—then, somebody's
a goose

For vaunting both as genuine. 'Guests'!
Don't fear!

They'll make a wry face, nor too much
of that,

And leave you in your glory.

'No, sometimes
They doubt and say as much!' Ay,
doubt they do!

And what's the consequence? 'Of
course they doubt'—

(You triumph) 'that explains the hitch
at once!'

Doubt posed our "medium," puzzled
his pure mind;

He gave them back their rubbish:
pitch chaff in,

Could flour come out o' the honest
mill?' So, prompt

Applaud the faithful: cases flock in
point,

'How, when a mocker willed a
"medium" once

Should name a spirit James whose name
was George,

"James" cried the "medium,"—'twas
the test of truth!'

In short, a hit proves much, a miss
proves more.

Does this convince? The better: does
it fail?

Time for the double-shotted broadside,
then—

The grand means, last resource. Look
black and big!

'You style us idiots, therefore—why
stop short
Accomplices in rascality: this we hear
In our own house, from our invited
guest
Found brave enough to outrage a poor
boy
Exposed by our good faith! Have you
been heard?
Now, then, hear us; one man's not
quite worth twelve.
You see a cheat? Here's some twelve
see an ass:
Excuse me if I calculate: good day!
Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs
explode,
Sludge waves his hat in triumph!

Or—he don't.

There's something in real truth (explain
who can!)
One casts a wistful eye at, like the
horse
Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks
and won't munch
'Because he spies a corn-bag: hang that
truth,
It spoils all dainties proffered in its
place!
I've felt at times when, cockered,
cossetted
And coddled by the aforesaid company,
Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never
fear,
But o'er their shoulders spit at the
flying man,—
I've felt a child; only, a fractious child
That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt,
grandmother,
Who keep him from the kennel, sun and
wind,
Good fun and wholesome mud,—
enjoined be sweet,
And comely and superior,—eyes askance
The ragged sons of the gutter at their
game,
Fain would be down with them i' the
thick of the filth,
Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking
plain,
And calling granny the grey old cat
she is.
I've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,

Huggings and humbug—gnashed my
teeth to mark
A decent dog pass! It's too bad, I say,
Ruining a soul so!

But what's 'so,' what's fixed,
Where may one stop? Nowhere! The
cheating's nursed
Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon
enough:
But you're for progress. 'All old,
nothing new?
Only the usual talking through the
mouth,
Or writing by the hand? I own, I
thought
This would develop, grow demonstrable,
Make doubt absurd, give figures we
might see,
Flowers we might touch. There's no
one doubts you, Sludge!
You dream the dreams, you see the
spiritual sights,
The speeches come in your head, beyond
dispute.
Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all
mouths,
We want some outward manifestation!
—well,
The Pennsylvanians gained such; why
not Sludge?
He may improve with time!

Ay, that he may!
He sees his lot: there's no avoiding fate.
'Tis a trifle at first. 'Eh, David?
Did you hear?
You jogged the table, your foot caused
the squeak,
This time you're . . . joking, are you
not, my boy?
'N-n-no!'—and I'm done for, bought
and sold henceforth.
The old good easy jog-trot way,
the . . . eh?
The . . . not so very false, as falsehood
goes,
The spinning out and drawing fine, you
know,—
Really mere novel-writing of a sort,
Acting, or improvising, make-believe,
Surely not downright cheaterly! Any
how,

'Tis done with and my lot cast; Cheat's
my name:

The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
Has settled what you'll have the
souchong's smack:

The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.

Then, it's so cruel easy! Oh, those
tricks

That can't be tricks, those feats by
sleight of hand,

Clearly no common conjurer's!—no,
indeed!

A conjurer? Choose me any craft in
the world

A man puts hand to; and with six
months' pains,

I'll play you twenty tricks miraculous
To people untaught the trade: have
you seen glass blown,

Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit
that I chip,

Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
To the oven? Try and do it! Take
my word,

Practise but half as much, while limbs
are lithe,

To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your
joints,

Manage your feet, dispose your hands
aright,

Work wires that twitch the curtains,
play the glove

At end of your slipper,—then put out
the lights

And . . . there, there, all you want
you'll get, I hope!

I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.

Now, lights on table again! I've done
my part,

You take my place while I give thanks
and rest.

'Well, Judge Humgruffin, what's your
verdict, sir?

You, hardest head in the United
States,—

Did you detect a cheat here? Wait!
Let's see!

Just an experiment first, for candour's
sake!

I'll try and cheat you, Judge! The
table tilts:

Is it I that move it? Write? I'll
press your hand:

Cry when I push, or guide your pencil,
Judge!

Sludge still triumphant! 'That a rap,
indeed?

That, the real writing? Very like a
whale!

Then, if, sir, you—a most distinguished
man,

And, were the Judge not here, I'd say,
. . . no matter!

Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us
in.—

There's little fear that Sludge will!

Won't he, ma'am?

But what if our distinguished host, like
Sludge,

Bade God bear witness that he played
no trick,

While you believed that what produced
the raps

Was just a certain child who died, you
know.

And whose last breath you thought
your lips had felt?

Eh? That's a capital point, ma'am:
Sludge begins

At your entreaty with your dearest
dead,

The little voice set lisping once again,
The tiny hand made feel for yours once

more,

The poor lost image brought back, plain
as dreams,

Which image, if a word had chanced
recall,

The customary cloud would cross your
eyes,

Your heart return the old trick, pay its
pang!

A right mood for investigation, this!
One's at one's ease with Saul and

Jonathan,
Pompey and Caesar: but one's own
lost child . . .

I wonder, when you heard the first clod
drop

From the spadeful at the grave-side,
felt you free

To investigate who twitched your
funeral scarf

Or brushed your flounces ? Then, it
 came of course,
 You should be stunned and stupid ;
 then, (how else ?)
 Your breath stopped with your blood,
 your brain struck work.
 But now, such causes fail of such effects,
 All's changed,—the little voice begins
 afresh,
 Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and
 try
 And touch the truth. ' Tests ? Didn't
 the creature tell
 Its nurse's name, and say it lived six
 years,
 And rode a rocking-horse ? Enough
 of tests !
 Sludge never could learn that ! '

He could not, eh ?
 You compliment him. ' Could not ? '
 Speak for yourself !
 I'd like to know the man I ever saw
 Once,—never mind where, how, why,
 when,—once saw,
 Of whom I do not keep some matter in
 mind
 He'd swear I ' could not ' know,
 sagacious soul !
 What ? Do you live in this world's
 blow of blacks,
 Palavery gossipry, a single hour
 Nor find one smut has settled on your
 nose,
 Of a smut's worth, no more, no less ?—
 one fact
 Out of the drift of facts, whereby you
 learn
 What someone was, somewhere, some-
 when, somewhy ?
 You don't tell folk—' See what has
 stuck to me !
 Judge Humgruffin, our most dis-
 tinguished man,
 Your uncle was a tailor, and your
 wife
 Thought to have married Miggs, missed
 him, hit you !—
 Do you, sir, though you see him twice
 a-week ?
 ' No, ' you reply, ' what use retailing it ?
 Why should I ? ' But, you see, one
 day you *should*,

Because one day there's much use,—
 when this fact
 Brings you the Judge upon both gouty
 knees
 Before the supernatural ; proves that
 Sludge
 Knows, as you say, a thing he ' could
 not ' know :
 Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an
 outstretched face,
 The way the wind drives ?

' Could not ' ! Look you now,
 I'll tell you a story ! There's a
 whiskered chap,
 A foreigner, that teaches music here
 And gets his bread,—knowing no better
 way :
 He says, the fellow who informed of
 him
 And made him fly his country and fall
 West,
 Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched
 soles and sang,
 In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
 In a cellar by their Broadway, all day
 long ;
 Never asked questions, stopped to listen
 or look,
 Nor lifted nose from lapstone ; let the
 world
 Roll round his three-legged stool, and
 news run in
 The ears he hardly seemed to keep
 pricked up.
 Well, that man went on Sundays,
 touched his pay,
 And took his praise from government,
 you see ;
 For something like two dollars every
 week,
 He'd engage tell you some one little
 thing
 Of some one man, which led to many
 more,
 (Because one truth leads right to the
 world's end),
 And make you that man's master—
 when he dined
 And on what dish, where walked to
 keep his health
 And to what street. His trade was,
 throwing thus

His sense out, like an ant-eater's long
tongue,
Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
And when 'twas crusted o'er with
creatures—slick,
Their juice enriched his palate. 'Could
not Sludge !'

I'll go yet a step further, and main-
tain,
Once the imposture plunged its proper
depth
In the rotten of your natures, all of
you,—

(If one 's not mad nor drunk, and hardly
then)

It 's impossible to cheat—that 's, be
found out !

Go tell your brotherhood this first slip
of mine,

All to-day's tale, how you detected
Sludge,

Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain
confess,

And so has come to grief ! You'll find,
I think,

Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in
your face.

There now, you've told them ! What 's
their prompt reply ?

'Sir, did that youth confess he had
cheated me,

I'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at
times ;

That 's in the "medium"-nature, thus
they're made,

Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to
scratch.

And so all cats are ; still, a cat 's the
beast

You coax the strange electric sparks
from out,

By rubbing back its fur ; not so a dog,
Nor lion, nor lamb : 'tis the cat's
nature, sir !

Why not the dog's ? Ask God, who
made them beasts !

D'ye think the sound, the nicely-
balanced man

(Like me)—aside)—'like you yourself,'
—(aloud)

'—He 's stuff to make a "medium" ?
Bless your soul,

'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-
halfs,

Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the
fire !

We must take such as we find them,
'ware their tricks,

Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge
took in you—

How, I can't say, not being there to
watch :

He was tried, was tempted by your
easiness,—

He did not take in me !'

Thank you for Sludge !

I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
When what you hear 's my best word ?

'Tis a challenge ;

'Snap at all strangers, you half-tamed
prairie-dog,

So you cower duly at your keeper's nod !
Cat, show what claws were made for,

muffling them
Only to me ! Cheat others if you can,

Me, if you dare !' And, my wise sir,
I dared—

Did cheat you first, made you cheat
others next,

And had the help of your vaunted
manliness

To bully the incredulous. You used
me ?

Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
Persuaded folk they knew not their own

name,
And straight they'd own the error !

Who was the fool
When, to an awe-struck, wide-eyed,

open-mouthed
Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce

Milton composing baby-rhymes, and
Locke

Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing
Greek

In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting
psalms

To crotchet and quaver ? I've made
a spirit squeak

In sham voice for a minute, then out-
broke

Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
Have copied some ghost's pothooks,

half a page,

Then ended with my own scrawl
undisguised.

'All right! The ghost was merely
using Sludge,

Suiting itself from his imperfect stock!'
Don't talk of gratitude to me! For
what?

For being treated as a showman's ape,
Encouraged to be wicked and made
sport,

Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
So long as the ape be in it and no
man—

Because a nut pays every mood alike.
Curse your superior, superintending
sort,

Who, since you hate smoke, send up
boys that climb

To cure your chimney, bid a 'medium'
lie

To sweep you truth down! Curse your
women too,

Your insolent wives and daughters, that
fire up

Or faint away if a male hand squeeze
theirs,

Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play
with Sludge

As only a 'medium,' only the kind of
thing

They must humour, fondle . . . oh, to
misconceive

Were too preposterous! But I've paid
them out!

They've had their wish—called for the
naked truth,

And in she tripped, sat down and bade
them stare:

They had to blush a little and forgive!
'The fact is, children talk so; in next
world

All our conventions are reversed,—
perhaps

Made light of: something like old
prints, my dear!

The Judge has one, he brought from
Italy,

A metropolis in the background,—o'er
a bridge,

A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful
groups

Of wayside travellers, peasants at their
work,

And, full in front, quite unconcerned,
why not?

Three nymphs conversing with a cava-
lier,

And never a rag among them: "fine,"
folk cry—

And heavenly manners seem not much
unlike!

Let Sludge go on; we'll fancy it's in
print!

If such as came for wool, sir, went home
shorn,

Where is the wrong I did them? 'Twas
their choice;

They tried the adventure, ran the risk,
tossed up

And lost, as some one's sure to do in
games;

They fancied I was made to lose,—
smoked glass

Useful to spy the sun through, spare
their eyes:

And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
They thought to pierce, and, for their
pains, grew blind,

Whose were the fault but theirs?
While, as things go,

Their loss amounts to gain, the more's
the shame!

They've had their peep into the spirit-
world,

And all this world may know it!
They've fed fat

Their self-conceit which else had
starved: what chance

Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
And compassing distinction from the
flock,

Friends of a feather? Well, they paid
for it,

And not prodigiously; the price o' the
play,

Not counting certain pleasant inter-
ludes,

Was scarce a vulgar play's worth.
When you buy

The actor's talent, do you dare propose
For his soul beside? Whereas, my

soul you buy!

Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be
Macbeth,

Or you will not hear his first word!
Just go through

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>That slight formality, swear himself 's the Thane, And thenceforth he may strut and fret his hour, Spout, spawl, or spin his target, 'no one cares ! Why hadn't I leave to play tricks, Sludge as Sludge ? Enough of it all ! I've wiped out scores with you— Vented your fustian, let myself be streaked Like a tom-fool with your ochre and carmine, Worn patchwork your respectable fingers sewed To metamorphose somebody,—yes, I've earned My wages, swallowed down my bread of shame, And shake the crumbs off—where but in your face ?</p> <p>As for religion—why, I served it, sir ! I'll stick to that ! With my <i>phenomena</i> I laid the atheist sprawling on his back, And propped Saint Paul up, or, at least, Swedenborg ! In fact, it 's just the proper way to balk These troublesome fellows—liars, one and all, Are not these sceptics ? Well, to baffle them, No use in being squeamish : lie your- self ! Erect your buttress just as wide o' the line, Your side, as they've built up the wall on theirs ; Where both meet, midway in a point, is truth, High overhead : so, take your room, pile bricks, Lie ! Oh, there 's titillation in all shame ! What snow may lose in white, it gains in rose : Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—nor a bad exchange ! Glory be on her, for the good she wrought, Breeding belief anew 'neath ribs of death,</p> | <p>Brow-beating now the unabashed before, Ridding us of their whole life's gathered straws By a live coal from the altar ! Why, of old, Great men spent years and years in writing books To prove we've souls, and hardly proved it then : Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and me ! Surely, to this good issue, all was fair— Not only fondling Sludge, but, even suppose He let escape some spice of knavery,— well, In wisely being blind to it ! Don't you praise Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye And saying . . . what was it—that he could not see The signal he was bothered with ? Ay, indeed !</p> <p>I'll go beyond : there 's a real love of a lie, Liars find ready-made for lies they make, As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar- plum. At best, 'tis never pure and full belief ; Those furthest in the quagmire,—don't suppose They strayed there with no warning, got no chance Of a filth-speck in their face, which they clenched teeth, Bent brow against ! Be sure they had their doubts, And fears, and fairest challenges to try The floor o' the seeming solid sand ! But no ! Their faith was pledged, acquaintance too appraised, All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs waved, And Sludge called ' pet ' : 'twas easier marching on To the promised land ; join those who, Thursday next, Meant to meet Shakespeare ; better follow Sludge—</p> |
|---|---|

Prudent, oh sure!—on the alert, how else?
 But making for the mid-bog, all the same!
 To hear your outcries, one would think I caught
 Miss Stokes by the scuff o' the neck, and pitched her flat,
 Foolish-face-foremost! Hear these simpletons,
 That's all I beg, before my work's begun,
 Before I've touched them with my finger-tip!
 Thus they await me (do but listen, now! It's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate The baby voice, though) 'In so many tales
 Must be some truth, truth though a pin-point big,
 Yet, some: a single man's deceived, perhaps—
 Hardly, a thousand: to suppose one cheat
 Can gull all these, were more miraculous far
 Than aught we should confess a miracle'—
 And so on. Then the Judge sums up—(it's rare)—
 Bids you respect the authorities that leap
 To the judgment-seat at once,—why, don't you note
 The limpid nature, the unblemished life,
 The spotless honour, indisputable sense
 Of the first upstart with his story? What—
 Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now
 Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble him?
 Fools, these are: ay, and how of their opposites
 Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,
 Believe for a moment?—Men emasculate,
 Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs use,
 With superstition safely,—cold of blood,

Who saw what made for them in the mystery,
 Took their occasion, and supported Sludge
 —As proselytes? No, thank you, far too shrewd!
 —But, promisers of fair play, encouragers
 Of the claimant; who in candour needs must hoist
 Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of Sludge
 To carry off, criticize, and cant about! Didn't Athens treat Saint Paul so?—
 at any rate,
 It's 'a new thing,' philosophy fumbles at.
 Then there's the other picker-out of pearl
 From dung-heaps,—ay, your literary man,
 Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with Sludge
 Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust
 Of the doctrine, flavours thence, he well knows how,
 The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
 All for the book's sake, and the public's stare,
 And the cash that's God's sole solid in this world!
 Look at him! Try to be too bold, too gross
 For the master! Not you! He's the man for muck;
 Shovel it forth, full-splash, he'll smooth your brown
 Into artistic richness, never fear!
 Find him the crude stuff; when you recognize
 Your lie again, you'll doff your hat to it,
 Dressed out for company! 'For company,'
 I say, since there's the relish of success.
 Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,
 Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
 Who ushered in the stranger: you must sigh
 'How melancholy, he, the only one,
 Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth

Himself gave birth to !—There's the triumph's smack !
 That man would choose to see the whole world roll
 I' the slime o' the slough, so he might touch the tip
 Of his brush with what I call the best of browns—
 Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the power
 Of the outworn umber and bistre !

Yet I think
 There's a more hateful form of foolery—
 The social sage's, Solomon of saloons
 And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
 Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block
 To try the edge of his faculty upon,
 Prove how much common sense he'll hack and hew
 In the critical minute 'twixt the soup and fish !
 These were my patrons : these, and the like of them
 Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it,—
 These I have injured ! Gratitude to these ?
 The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute
 To the greenhorn and the bully—friends of hers,
 From the wag that wants the queer jokes for his club,
 To the snuff-box-decorator, honest man,
 Who just was at his wits' end where to find
 So genial a Pasiphae ! All and each
 Pay, compliment, protect from the police,
 And how she hates them for their pains, like me !
 So much for my remorse at thanklessness
 Toward a deserving public !

But, for God ?
 Ay, that's a question ! Well, sir, since you press—
 (How you do tease the whole thing out of me !
 I don't mean you, you know, when I say 'them' :

Hate you, indeed ! But that Miss Stokes, that Judge !
 Enough, enough—with sugar : thank you, sir !
 Now for it, then ! Will you believe me, though ?
 You've heard what I confess ; I don't unsay
 A single word : I cheated when I could,
 Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
 Wrote down names weak in sympathetic ink,
 Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-match,
 And all the rest ; believe that : believe this,
 By the same token, though it seem to set
 The crooked straight again, unsay the said,
 Stick up what I've thrown down ; I can't help that :
 It's truth ! I somehow vomit truth to-day.
 This trade of mine—I don't know, can't be sure
 But there was something in it, tricks and all !
 Really, I want to light up my own mind.
 They were tricks,—true, but what I mean to add
 Is also true. First,—don't it strike you, sir ?
 Go back to the beginning,—the first fact
 We're taught is, there's a world beside this world,
 With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry ;
 That much within that world once sojourned here,
 That all upon this world will travel there,
 And therefore that we, bodily here below,
 Must have exactly such an interest
 In learning what may be the ways o' the world
 Above us, as the disembodied folk
 Have (by all analogic likelihood)
 In watching how things go in the old world
 With us, their sons, successors, and what not.
 Qh, yes, with added powers probably,

Fit for the novel state,—old loves grown pure,
 Old interests understood aright,—they watch !
 Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to help,
 Proportionate to advancement: they're ahead,
 That's all—do what we do, but noblier done—
 Use plate, whereas we eat our meals off delf,
 (To use a figure.)

Concede that, and I ask
 Next, what may be the mode of inter-
 course
 Between us men here, and those once-
 men there ?
 First comes the Bible's speech ; then,
 history
 With the supernatural element,—you know—
 All that we sucked in with our mothers' milk,
 Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
 Till it's found bone of bone and flesh of flesh.
 See now, we start with the miraculous,
 And know it used to be, at all events :
 What's the first step we take, and
 Can't but take,
 In arguing from the known to the
 obscure ?
 Why this : ' What was before, may be
 to-day.
 Since Samuel's ghost appeared to Savl,
 —of course
 My brother's spirit may appear to me.'
 Go tell your teacher that ! ' What's his
 reply ?
 What brings a shade of doubt for the
 first time
 O'er his brow late so luminous with
 faith ?
 ' Such things have been,' says he, ' and
 there's no doubt
 Such things may be : but I advise
 mistrust
 Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more than
 all, your brain,
 Unless it be of your great-grandmother,
 Whenever they propose a ghost to you "

The end is, there's a composition
 struck ;
 'Tis settled, we've some way of inter-
 course
 Just as in Saul's time ; only, different :
 How, when and where, precisely,—find
 it out !
 I want to know, then, what's so natural
 As that a person born into this world
 And seized on by such teaching, should
 begin
 With firm expectancy and a frank look-
 out
 For his own allotment, his especial share
 In the secret,—his particular ghost, in
 fine ?
 I mean, a person born to look that way,
 Since natures differ : take the painter-
 sort,
 One man lives fifty years in ignorance
 Whether grass be green or red,—' No
 kind of eye
 For colour,' say you ; while another
 picks
 And puts away even pebbles, when a
 child,
 Because of bluish spots and pinky
 veins—
 ' Give him forthwith a paint-box !'
 Just the same
 Was I born . . . ' medium,' you won't
 let me say,—
 Well, seer of the supernatural
 Everywhen, anyhow and every-
 where,—
 Will that do ?

I and all such boys of course
 Started with the same stock of Bible-
 truth ;
 Only,—what in the rest you style their
 sense,
 Instinct, blind reasoning but imperative,
 This, betimes, taught them the old
 world had one law
 And ours another : ' New world, new
 laws,' cried they :
 ' None but old laws, seen everywhere
 at work,'
 Cried I, and by their help explained my
 life
 The Jews' way, still a working way to
 me.

Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved
the lights,
Or Santa Claus slid down on New
Year's Eve
And stuffed with cakes the stocking at
my bed,
Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean
the fingered slate
Of the sum that came to grief the day
before.

This could not last long : soon enough
I found

Who had worked wonders thus, and to
what end :

But did I find all easy, like my mates ?
Henceforth no supernatural any more ?
Not a whit : what projects the billiard-
balls ?

'A cue,' you answer : 'Yes, a cue,'
said I ;

'But what hand, off the cushion, moved
the cue ?

What unseen agency, outside the world,
Prompted its puppets to do this and
that,

Put cakes and shoes and slates into
their mind,

These mothers and aunts, nay even
schoolmasters ?'

Thus high I sprang, and there have
settled since.

Just so I reason, in sober earnest
still,

About the greater godsend, what you
call

The serious gains and losses of my life.
What do I know or care about your
world

Which either is or seems to be ? This
snap

Of my fingers, sir ! My care is for my-
self ;

Myself am whole and sole reality
Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
Gathered about it : that's the use of
things.

'Tis easy saying they serve vast pur-
poses,

Advantage their grand selves : be it
true or false,

Each thing may have two uses. What's
a star ?

A world, or a world's sun : doesn't it
serve

As taper also, time-piege, weather-glass,
And almanac ? Are stars not set for
signs

When we should shear our sheep, sow
corn, prune trees ?

The Bible says so.

Well, I add one use

To all the acknowledged uses, and
declare

If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-
night,

It warns me, 'Go, nor lose another day,
And have your hair cut, Sludge !' You
laugh : and why ?

Were such a sign too hard for God to
give ?

No : but Sludge seems too little for
such grace :

Thank you, sir ! So you think, so does
not Sludge !

When you and good men gape at
Providence,

Go into history and bid us mark
Not merely powder-plots prevented,

crowns
Kept on kings' heads by miracle enough,
But private mercies—oh, you've told

me, sir,
Of such interpositions ! How yourself

Once, missing on a memorable day
Your handkerchief—just setting out,

you know,—
You must return to fetch it, lost the

train,
And saved your precious self from what

befell
The thirty-three whom Providence

forgot.
You tell, and ask me what I think of

this ?
Well, sir, I think then, since you needs

must know,
What matter had you and Boston city

to boot
Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peel-

ings ? Much
To you, no doubt : for me — un-

doubtedly
The cutting of my hair concerns me

more,

Because, however sad the truth may seem,
 Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
 You set apart that day in every year
 For special thanksgiving, were a
 heathen else :
 Well, I who cannot boast the like escape,
 Suppose I said 'I don't thank Providence
 For my part, owing it no gratitude ?'
 'Nay, but you owe as much'—you'd
 tutor me,
 'You, every man alive, for blessings
 gained
 In every hour of the day, could you
 but know !
 I saw my crowning mercy : all have
 such,
 Could they but see !' Well, sir, why
 don't they see ?
 'Because they won't look,—or perhaps,
 they can't.'
 'Then, sir, suppose I can, and will, and do
 Look, microscopically as is right,
 Into each hour with its infinitude
 Of influences at work to profit Sludge ?
 For that's the case : I've sharpened
 up my sight
 To spy a providence in the fire's going
 out,
 The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking
 fast
 Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call
 such facts
 Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
 And those same thanks which you exact
 from me,
 Prove too prodigious payment : thanks
 for what,
 If nothing guards and guides us little
 men ?
 No, no, sir ! You must put away your
 pride,
 Resolve to let Sludge into partnership !
 I live by signs and omens : looked at
 the roof
 Where the pigeons settle—'If the
 further bird,
 The white, takes wing first, I'll confess
 when thrashed ;
 Not, if the blue does'—so I said to
 myself

Last week, lest you should take me by
 surprise :
 Off flapped the white,—and I'm confessing, sir !
 Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
 With only me, in the world : how can
 'you tell ?
 'Because unlikely !' Was it likelier,
 now,
 That this our one out of 'all worlds
 beside,
 The what-d'you-call-'em millions,
 should be just
 Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
 And the rest o' the tale ? Yet the
 tale's true, you know :
 Such undeserving clod was graced so
 once ;
 Why not graced likewise undeserving
 Sludge ?
 Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy
 rags ?
 All you can bring against my privilege
 Is, that another way was taken with
 you,—
 Which I don't question. It's pure
 grace, my luck.
 I'm broken to the way of nods and
 winks,
 And need no formal summoning.
 You've a help ;
 Holloa his name or whistle, clap your
 hands,
 Stamp with your foot or pull the bell :
 all's one,
 He understands you want him, here he
 comes.
 Just so, I come at the knocking : you,
 sir, wait
 The tongue of the bell, nor stir before
 you catch
 Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper
 brisk,
 Or that traditional peal was wont to
 cheer
 Your mother's face turned heaven-
 ward : short of these
 There's no authentic intimation, eh ?
 Well, when you hear, you'll answer
 them, start up
 And stride into the presence, top of toe,
 And there find Sludge beforehand,
 Sludge that sprung

At noise o' the knuckle on the partition-wall !

I think myself the more religious man.
Religion 's all or nothing ; it 's no mere smile

Of contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
No quality of the finelier-tempered clay
Like its whiteness or its lightness ;
rather, stuff

Of the very stuff, life of life, self of self.

I tell you, men won't notice ; when they do,

They'll understand. I notice nothing else,

I'm eyes, ears, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,

Nothing eludes me, everything 's a hint,
Handle and help. It 's all absurd, and yet

There 's something in it all, I know :
how much ?

No answer ! What does that prove ?
Man 's still man,

Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work

When all 's done ; but, if somewhat 's done, like this,

Or not done, is the case the same ?
Suppose

I blunder in my guess at the true sense
Of the knuckle-summons, nine times out of ten,—

What if the tenth guess happen to be right ?

If the tenth shovel-load of powdered quartz

Yield me the nugget ? I gather, crush, sift all,

Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.

To give you a notion, now—(let who wins, laugh !)

When first I see a man, what do I first ?
Why, count the letters which make up his name,

And as their number chances, even or odd,

Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course :
Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured name,

And haven't I found a patron, sir, in you ?

' Shall I cheat this stranger ? ' I take apple-pips,

Stick one in either *canthus* of my eye,
And if the left drops first—(your left, sir, stuck)

I'm warn'd, I let the trick alone this time.

You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,

You judge of character by other rules :
Don't your rules sometimes fail you ?

Pray, what rule
Have you judged Sludge by hitherto ?

Oh, be sure,
You, everybody blunders, just as I,
In simpler things than these by far !

For see :
I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre,
Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,

Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,

And then declared, for outcome of his pains,

Next summer must be dampish : 'twas a drought.

His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,

Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent. thereby,

And proved a sage indeed : how came his lore ?

Because one brindled heifer, late in March,

Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow

He got into his head that drought was meant !

I don't expect all men can do as much :
Such kissing goes by favour. You must take

A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist

I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
Open-mouthed, like my friend the ant-cater,

Letting all nature's loosely-guarded notes

Settle and, slick, be swallowed ! Think yourself

The one i' the world, the one for whom the world

Was made, expect it tickling at your mouth !

Then will the swarm of busy buzzing flies,

Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell, thrive,

Breed, multiply, and bring you food enough.

I can't pretend to mind your smiling, sir !

Oh, what you mean is this ! Such intimate way,

Close converse, frank exchange of offices, Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great

With the infinitely small, betokened here By a course of signs and omens, raps and sparks,—

How does it suit the dread traditional text

Of the 'Great and Terrible Name' ? Shall the Heaven of Heavens Stoop to such child's-play ?

Please, sir, go with me A moment, and I'll try to answer you. The '*Magnum et terribile*' (is that right ?)

Well, folk began with this in the early day ;

And all the acts they recognized in proof Were thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, whirlwinds, dealt

Indisputably on men whose death they caused.

There, and there only, folk saw Providence

At work,—and seeing it, 'twas right enough

All heads should tremble, hands wring hands amain,

And knees knock hard together at the breath

Of the Name's first letter ; why, the Jews, I'm told,

Won't write it down, no, to this very hour,

Nor speak aloud : you know best if't be so.

Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept (Because somehow people once born must live)

Out of the sound, sight, swing and sway of the Name,

Into a corner, the dark rest of the world, And safe space where as yet no fear had reached ;

'Twas there they looked about them, breathed again,

And felt indeed at home, as we might say.

The current of common things, the daily life,

This had their due contempt ; no Name pursued

Man from the mountain-top where fires abide,

To his particular mouse-hole at its foot Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in short :

Such was man's vulgar business, far too small

To be worth thunder : 'small,' folk kept on, 'small,'

With much complacency in those great days !

A mote of sand, you know, a blade of grass—

What was so despicable as mere grass, Except perhaps the life of the worm or fly

Which fed there ? These were 'small' and men were great.

Well, sir, the old way's altered somewhat since,

And the world wears another aspect now :

Somebody turns our spyglass round, or else

Puts a new lens in it : grass, worm, fly grow big :

We find great things are made of little things,

And little things go lessening till at last Comes God behind them. Talk of mountains now ?

We talk of mould that heaps the mountain, mites

That throng the mould, and God that makes the mites.

The Name comes close behind a stomach-cyst,

The simplest of creations, just a sac That's mouth, heart, legs and belly at once, yet lives

And feels, and could do neither, we conclude,

If simplified still further one degree :
The small becomes the dreadful and immense !

Lightning, forsooth ? No word more upon that !

A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
With a bit of wire and knob of brass,
and there's

Your dollar's-worth of lightning ! But
the cyst—

The life of the least of the little things ?

No, no !

Preachers and teachers try another tack,
Come near the truth this time : they put
aside

Thunder and lightning : ' That 's mistake,' they cry,

' Thunderbolts fall for neither fright nor sport,

But do appreciable good, like tides,
Changes of the wind, and other natural facts—

" Good " meaning good to man, his body or soul.

Mediate, immediate, all things minister
To man,—that's settled : be our future text

" We are His children ! " ' So, they
now harangue

About the intention, the contrivance, all
That keeps up an incessant play of love,—

See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it !

Well, sir, I put this question : I'm a child ?

I lose no time, but take you at your word :

How shall I act a child's part properly ?
Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to live

With such a thought as this a-worrying you ?

' She has it in her power to throttle me,
Or stab or poison : she may turn me out,
Or lock me in,—nor stop at this, to-day,
But cut me off to-morrow from the estate

I look for'—(long may you enjoy it, sir !)

' In brief, she may unchild the child I am.'

You never had such crotchets ? Nor have I !

Who, frank confessing childship from the first,

Cannot both fear and take my ease at once,

So, don't fear,—know what might be, well enough,

But know too, child-like, that it will not be,

At least in my case, mine, the son and heir

Of the kingdom, as yourself proclaim my style.

But do you fancy I stop short at this ?
Wonder if suit and service, sons and heirs

Needs must expect, I dare pretend to find ?

If, looking for signs proper to such an one,

I straight perceive them irresistible ?
Concede that homage is a son's plain right,

And, never mind the nods and raps and winks,

'Tis the pure obvious supernatural
Steps forward, does its duty : why, of course !

I have presentiments ; my dreams come true :

I fancy a friend stands whistling all in white

Blithe as a boblink, and he's dead I learn.

I take dislike to a dog my favourite long,
And sell him ; he goes mad next week and snaps.

I guess that stranger will turn up to-day

I have not seen these three years ; there's his knock.

I wager 'sixty peaches on that tree !—

That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
That your wife's brother's cousin's name was George—

And win on all points. Oh, you wince at this ?

You'd fain distinguish between gift and gift,

Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
O' the elbow when at whist he ought to
trump ?

With Sludge it's too absurd ? *Fine,*
draw the line

Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is
not mine !

Bless us, I'm turning poet ! It 's time
to end.

How you have drawn me out, sir ! All
I ask

Is—am I heir or not heir ? If I'm he,
Then, sir, remember, that same per-
sonage

(To judge by what we read in the news-
paper)

Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
To carry up and down his coronet,
Another servant, probably a duke,
To hold egg-nogg in readiness : why
want

Attendance, sir, when helps in his
father's house

Around, I'd like to know ?

Enough of talk !

My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.
Why, which of those who say they
disbelieve,

Your clever people, but has dreamed
his dream,

Caught his coincidence, stumbled on his
fact

He can't explain, (he'll tell you smil-
ingly)

Which he's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,
So calls a puzzle and problem, proud
of it :

Bidding you still be on your guard, you
know,

Because one fact don't make a system
stand,

Nor prove this an occasional escape
Of spirit beneath the matter : that 's
the way !

Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by
piece,

The fact in California, the fine gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded
these,

But never made a system stand, nor
dug !

So wise men hold out in each hollowed
palm

A handful of experience, sparkling fact
They can't explain ; and since their
rest of life

Is all explainable, what proof in this ?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of
gold,

And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each
fool has found

Of the million others such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,
Truth questionless though unexplain-
able,

And the miraculous proved the common-
place !

The other fools believed in mud, no
doubt—

Failed to know gold they saw : was
that so strange ?

Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-
fugues,

'Time' with the foil in carte, jump
their own height,

Cut the mutton with the broadsword,
skate a five,

Make the red hazard with the cue, clip
nails

While swimming, in five minutes row
a mile,

Pull themselves three feet up with the
left arm,

Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances ?

The Sludge with luck, who sees the
spiritual facts,

His fellows strive and fail to see, may
rank

With these, and share the advantage !

Ay, but share

The drawback ! Think it over by
yourself ;

I have not heart, sir, and the fire 's gone
grey.

Defect somewhere compensates for
success,

Everyone knows that ! Oh, we're
equals, sir !

The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win
the race :

Do you suppose I 'scape the common
lot ?

Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping both,
I guess what 's going on outside the veil,
Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-
time

In the islands where his kind arc, so
must fall

To capering by himself some shyny night,
As if your back-yard were a plot of
spice—

Thus am I 'ware of the spirit-world :
while you,

Blind as a beetle that way,—for amends,
Why, you can double fist and floor me,
sir !

Ride that hot, hardmouthed, horrid
horse of yours,

Laugh while it lightens, play with the
great dog,

Speak your mind though it vex some
friend to hear,

Never brag, never bluster, never
blush,—

In short, you've pluck, when I'm a
coward—there !

I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
I'm paralyzed, my hand's no more
a hand,

Nor my head, a head, in danger : you
can smile

And change the pipe in your cheek.
Your gift's not mine.

Would you swap for mine ? No ! but
you'd add my gift

To yours : I dare say ! I too sigh at
times,

Wish I were stouter, could tell truth
nor flinch,

Kept cool when threatened, did not
mind so much

Being dressed gaily, making strangers
stare,

Eating nice things ; when I'd amuse
myself,

I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain
I'm—now the President, now, Jenny
Lind,

Now, Emerson, now, the Benicia Boy—
With all the civilized world a-wondering

And worshipping ! I know it's folly
and worse :

I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the
soul,

But I can't cure myself,—despond,
despair,

And then, hey, presto, there 's a turn
of the wheel,

Under comes uppermost, fate makes
full amends ;

Sludge knows and sees and hears a
hundred things

You all are blind to,—I've my taste of
truth,

Likewise my touch of falsehood,—vice
no doubt,

But you've your vices also : I'm con-
tent.

What, sir ? You won't shake hands ?
' Because I cheat !

You've found me out in cheating !'
That 's enough

To make an apostle swear ! Why,
when I cheat,

*Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught
in the act,*

Are you, or rather, am I sure of the fact ?
(There 's verse again, but I'm inspired
somehow.)

Well then, I'm not sure ! I may be,
perhaps,

Free as a babe from cheating : how it
began,

My gift,—no matter ; what 'tis got to be
In the end now, that 's the question :

answer that !
Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was

holding mine,
Leading me whither, I had died of fright,

So, I was made believe I led myself.
If I should lay a six-inch plank from

roof
To roof, you would not cross the street,

one step,
Even at your mother's summons : but,

being shrewd,
If I paste paper on each side of the plank

And swear 'tis solid pavement, why,
you'll cross

Humming a tune the while, in ignorance
Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet

below :
I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for

stone.

Some impulse made me set a thing on
the move

Which, started once, ran really by
itself ;

Beer flows thus, suck the siphon ; toss
the kite,

It takes the wind and floats of its own
force.

Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for
the lack

Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it !

Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking
hen,

She'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
Daily for weeks to come. I've told my
lie,

And seen truth follow, marvels none
of mine ;

All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive !
I don't know if I move your hand
sometimes

When the spontaneous writing spreads
so far,

If my knee lifts the table all that height,
Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk
a-tilt,

Why the accordion plays a prettier
waltz

Than I can pick out on the piano-forte,
Why I speak so much more than I first
intend,

Describe so many things I never saw.
I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
Will, and does cheat : but in another
sense

I'm ready to believe my very self—
That every cheat's inspired, and every
lie

Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all
If I know a way without it ? This is
why !

There's a strange secret sweet self-
sacrifice

In any desecration of one's soul
To a worthy end,—isn't it Herodotus
(I wish I could read Latin !) who de-
scribes

The single gift of the land's virginity,
Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,

(I've but a hazy notion—help me, sir !)
For one purpose in the world, one day
in a life,

One hour in the day—thereafter, purity,
And a veil thrown o'er the past for
evermore !

Wellenow, they understood a many
things

Down by Nile city, or wherever it was !
I've always vowed, after the minute's lie,
And the good end's gain,—truth should
be mine henceforth.

This goes to the root of the matter, sir,
—this plain

Plump fact : accept it and unlock with it
The wards of many a puzzle !

Or, finally,

Why should I set so fine a gloss on
things ?

What need I care ? I cheat in self-
defence,

And there's my answer to a world of
cheats !

Cheat ? To be sure, sir ! What's the
world worth else ?

Who takes it as he finds, and thanks
his stars ?

Don't it want trimming, turning, fur-
bishing up

And polishing over ? Your so-styled
great men,

Do they accept one truth as truth as
found,

Or try their skill at tinkering ? What's
your world ?

Here are you born, who are, I'll say
at once,

One of the luckiest whether in head
and heart,

Body and soul, or all that helps the
same.

Well, now, look back : what faculty of
yours

Came to its full, had ample justice done
By growing when rain fell, biding its
time,

Solidifying growth when earth was
dead,

Spining up, broadening wide, in seasons
due ?

Never ! You shot up and frost nipped
you off,

Settled to sleep when sunshine bade
 you sprout;
 One faculty thwarted its fellow: at
 the end,
 All you boast is, 'I had prved a
 topping tree
 In other climes'—yet this was the
 right clime
 Had you foreknown the seasons.
 Young, you've force
 Wasted like well-streams: old,—oh,
 then indeed,
 Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes
 Through which you'd play off wondrous
 waterwork;
 Only, no water left to feed their play!
 Young,—you've a hope, an aim, a love;
 it's tossed
 And crossed and lost: you struggle on,
 some spark
 Shut in your heart against the puffs
 around,
 Through cold and pain; these in due
 time subside,
 Now then for age's triumph, the boarded
 light
 You mean to loose on the altered face of
 things,—
 Up with it on the tripod! It's extinct.
 Spend your life's remnant asking, which
 was best,
 Light smothered up that never peeped
 forth once,
 Or the cold cresset with full leave to
 shine?
 Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit
 of it
 Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on
 earth,
 But knowledge, useful for a second
 chance,
 Another life,—you've lost this world—
 you've gained
 Its knowledge for the next.—What
 knowledge, sir,
 Except that you know nothing? Nay,
 you doubt
 Whether 'twere better have made you
 man or brute,
 If aught be true, if good and evil
 clash.
 No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
 There's your world!

Give it me! I slap it brisk
 With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre:
 what's it now?
 Changed like a rock-flat, rough with
 rusty weed,
 At first wash-over of the returning wave
 All the dry, dead, impracticable stuff
 Starts into life and light again; this
 world
 Pervaded by the influx from the next.
 I cheat, and what's the happy con-
 sequence?
 You find full justice straightway dealt
 you out,
 Each want supplied, each ignorance set
 at ease,
 Each folly fooled. No life-long labour
 now
 As the price of worse than nothing!
 No mere film
 Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
 Against the outstretch of your very arms
 And legs in the sunshine moralists for-
 bid!
 What would you have? Just speak
 and, there, you see!
 You're supplemented, made a whole
 at last,
 Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you
 songs,
 And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
 Thus it goes on, not quite like life
 perhaps,
 But so near, that the very difference
 piques,
 Shows that e'en better than this best
 will be—
 This passing entertainment in a hut
 Whose bare walls take your taste since,
 one stage more,
 And you arrive at the palace: 'all half
 real,
 And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
 In a dream, lethargic kind of death in
 life,
 That helps the interchange of natures,
 flesh
 Transfused by souls, and such souls!
 Oh, 'tis choice!
 And if at whiles the bubble, blown too
 thin,
 Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly
 see

The real world through the false,—
 what *do* you see?
 Is the old so ruined? You find you're
 in a flock
 Of the youthful, earnest, passionate—
 genius, beauty,
 Rank and wealth also, if you care for
 these,
 And all depose their natural rights, hail
 you,
 (That 's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-
 fellow,
 Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow
 mine,
 I veritably possess them—banish doubt,
 And reticence and modesty alike!
 Why, here 's the Golden Age, old
 Paradise
 Or new Eutopia! Here is life indeed,
 And the world well won now, yours for
 the first time!

And all this might be, may be, and with
 good help
 Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge lies!
 Why, he 's at worst your poet who sings
 how Greeks
 That never were, in Troy which never
 was,
 Did this or the other impossible great
 thing!
 He 's Lowell—it 's a world, you smile
 and say,
 Of his own invention—wondrous Long-
 fellow,
 Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does
 more than they,
 And acts the books they write: the
 more 's his praise!

But, why do I mount to poets? Take
 plain prose—
 Dealers in common sense, set these at
 work,
 What can they do without their helpful
 lies?
 Each states the law and fact and face
 of the thing
 Just as he'd have them, finds what he
 thinks fit,
 Is blind to what missuits him, just
 records
 What makes his case out, quite ignores
 the rest.

It 's a History of the World, the Lizard
 Age,
 The Early Indians, the Old Country
 War,
 Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you
 please,
 All as the author wants it. Such a
 scribe
 You pay and praise for putting life in
 stones,
 Fire into fog, making the past your
 world.
 There 's plenty of 'How did you con-
 trive to grasp
 The thread which led you through this
 labyrinth?
 How build such solid fabric out of air?
 How on so slight foundation found this
 tale,
 Biography, narrative?' or, in other
 words,
 'How many lies did it require to make
 The portly truth you here present us
 with?'

'Oh,' quoth the penman, purring at
 your praise,
 'Tis fancy all; no particle of fact:
 I was poor and threadbare when I wrote
 that book
 "Bliss in the Golden City." I, at
 Thebes?

We writers paint out of our heads, you
 see!

'Ah, the more wonderful the gift in
 you,
 The more creativeness and godlike
 craft!'

But I, do I present you with my piece,
 It 's 'What, Sludge? When my
 sainted mother spoke
 The verses Lady Jane Grey last com-
 posed
 About the rosy bower in the seventh
 heaven
 Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep
 house,—
 You made the raps? 'Twas your
 invention that?
 Cur, slave and devil!'—eight fingers
 and two thumbs
 Stuck in my throat!

Well, if the marks seem gone,

'Tis because stiffish cock-tail, taken in time,
Is better for a bruise than arnica.

There, sir! I bear no malice; 'tisn't in me.

I know I acted wrongly: still, I've tried
What I could say in my excuse,—to show
The devil's not all devil . . . I don't pretend,

An angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir! And I've lost you, lost myself,
Lost all, l-l-l-

No—are you in earnest, sir?
O, your-, sir, is an angel's part! I know
What prejudice must be, what the common course

Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit:

Only you rise superior to it all!
No, sir, it don't hurt much; it's speaking long

That makes me choke a little: the marks will go!

What? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,

And not a word to Greeley? One—one kiss

Of the hand that saves me! You'll not let me speak,

I well know, and I've lost the right, too true!

But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)

Your sainted . . . Well, sir,—be it so!
That's, I think,

My bed-room candle. Good night!
Bl-l-less you, sir!

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard!
Cowardly scamp!

I only wish I dared burn down the house
And spoil your sniggering! Oh, what, you're the man?

You're satisfied at last? You've found out Sludge?

We'll see that presently: my turn, sir, next!

I too can tell my story: brute,—do you hear?—

You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,

In just such a fit of passion: no, it was . . .

To get this house of hers, and many a note

Like these . . . I'll pocket them, however . . . five,

Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,

Or else you poisoned her! Confound the cuss!

Where was my head? I ought to have prophesied

He'll die in a year and join her: that's the way.

I don't know where my head is: what had I done?

How did it all go? I said he poisoned her,

And hoped he'd have grace given him to repent,

Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me

And called me cheat: I thrashed him,—who could help?

He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees

To cut and run and save him from disgrace:

I do so, and once off, he slanders me. An end of him! Begin elsewhere anew!

Boston's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,

V-notes are something, liberty still more.

Beside, is he the only fool in the world?

APPARENT FAILURE

'We shall soon lose a celebrated building.'
Paris Newspaper.

I

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,
I passed through Paris, stopped a day

To see the baptism of your Prince;
Saw, made my bow, and went my way:

Walking the heat and headache off,
I took the Seine-side, you surmise,

Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,

So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

II

Only the Doric little Morgue !
 The dead-house where you show your
 drowned :
 Petrarch's Vacluse makes proud the
 Sorgue,
 Your Morgue has made the Seine
 renowned.
 One pays one's debt in such a case ;
 I plucked up heart and entered,—
 stalked,

Keeping a tolerable face
 Compared with some whose cheeks
 were chalked :
 Let them ! No Briton 's to be baulked !

III

First came the silent gazers ; next,
 A screen of glass, we're thankful for ;
 Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
 The three men who did most abhor
 Their life in Paris yesterday,
 So killed themselves : and now,
 enthroned
 Each on his copper couch, they lay
 Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
 I thought, and think, their sin 's atoned.

IV

Poor men, God made, and all for that !
 The reverence struck me ; o'er each
 head
 Religiously was hung his hat,
 Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
 Sacred from touch : each had his berth,
 His bounds, his proper place of rest,
 Who last night tenanted on earth
 Some arch, where twelve such slept
 abreast,—
 Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

V

How did 'it happen, my poor boy ?
 You wanted to be Buonaparte
 And have the Tuileries for toy,
 And could not, so it broke your heart ?
 You, old one by his side, I judge,
 Were, red as blood, a socialist,
 A leveller ! Does the Empire grudge
 You've gained what no Republic
 missed ?
 Be quiet, and unclench your fist !

VI

And this—why, he was red in vain,
 Or black,—poor fellow that is blue !
 What fancy was it, turned your brain ?
 Oh, women were the prize for you !
 Money gets women, cards and dice
 Get money, and ill-luck gets just
 The copper couch and one clear nice
 Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
 The right thing to extinguish lust !

VII

It's wiser being good than bad ;
 It's safer being meek than fierce :
 It's fitter being sane than mad.
 My own hope is, a sun will pierce
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched ;
 That, after Last, returns the First,
 Though a wide compass round be
 fetched ;
 That what began best, can't end
 worst,
 Nor what God blessed once, prove
 accurst.

EPILOGUE

FIRST SPEAKER, *as David*

I

On the first of the Feast of Feasts,
 ' The Dedication Day,
 When the Levites joined the Priests
 At the Altar in robed array,
 Gave signal to sound and say,—

II

When the thousands, rear and van,
 Swarming with one accord,
 Became as a single man,
 (Look, gesture, thought and word)
 In praising and thanking the Lord,—

III

When the singers lift up their voice,
 And the trumpets made endeavour,
 Sounding, 'In God rejoice !'
 Saying, 'In Him rejoice
 Whose mercy endureth for ever !'—

IV

Then the Temple filled with a cloud,
 Even the House of the Lord ;

Porch bent and pillar bowed :
 For the presence of the Lord,
 In the glory of His cloud,
 Had filled the House of the Lord.

SECOND SPEAKER, *as Renay*

Gone now! All gone across the dark
 so far,
 Sharpening fast, shuddering ever,
 shutting still,
 Dwindling into the distance, dies that
 star
 Which came, stood, opened once!
 We gazed our fill
 With upturned faces on as real a Face
 That, stooping from grave music and
 mild fire,
 Took in our homage, made a visible
 place
 Through many a depth of glory, gyre
 on gyre,
 For the dim human tribute. Was this
 true?
 Could man indeed avail, mere praise
 of his,
 To help by rapture God's own rapture
 too,
 Thrill with a heart's red tinge that
 pure pale bliss?
 Why did it end? Who failed to beat
 the breast,
 And shriek, and throw the arms
 protesting wide,
 When a first shadow showed the star
 addressed
 Itself to motion, and on either side
 The rims contracted as the rays retired;
 The music, like a fountain's sickening
 pulse,
 Subsidied on itself; awhile transpired
 Some vestige of a Face no pangs
 convulse,
 No prayers retard; then even this was
 gone,
 Lost in the night at last. We, lone
 and left
 Silent through centuries, ever and anon
 Venture to probe again the vault
 bereft
 Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
 Of multitudinous points, yet suns,
 men say—

And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
 But where may hide what came and
 loved our clay?
 How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
 The star which chose to stoop and
 stay for us?
 Unroll the records! Hailed ye such
 advance
 Indeed, and did your hope evenish
 thus?
 Watchers of twilight, is the worst
 averred?
 We shall not look up, know ourselves
 are seen,
 Speak, and be sure that we again are
 heard,
 Acting or suffering, have the disk's
 serene
 Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,
 Nor doubt that, were mankind inert
 and numb,
 Its core had never crimsoned all the
 same,
 Nor, missing ours, its music fallen
 dumb?
 Oh, dead succession to a dizzy post,
 Sad sway of sceptre whose mere
 touch appals,
 Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those
 the most
 On whose repugnant brow the crown
 next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER

I

Witless alike of will and way divine,
 How Heaven's high with earth's low
 should intertwine!
 Friends, I have seen through your eyes :
 now use mine.

II

Take the least man of all mankind, as I;
 Look at his head and heart, find how
 and why
 He differs from his fellows utterly:

III

Then, like me, watch when nature by
 degrees
 Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
 (They said of old the instinctive water
 flees

IV
Toward some elected point of central
rock,
As though, for its sake only, roamed
the flock
Of waves about the waste : awhile they
mock

V
With radiance caught for the occasion,
—hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds
and blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse.—

VI
The mimic monarch of the whirlpool,
king
O' the current for a minute : then they
wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the
thing,

VII
And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
The same part, choose another peak
as bare,
They find and flatter, feast and finish
there.

VIII
When you see what I tell you,—nature
dance

About each man of us, retire, advance,
As though the pageant's end were to
enhance

IX
His worth, and—once the life, his
„product, gained—
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife
sustained,
And show thus real, a thing—the North
but feigned,—

X
When you acknowledge that one world
could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from
you,—

XI
Why, where's the need of Temple, when
the walls
O' the world are that ? What use of
swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and
trumpet-calls ?

XII
That one Face, far from vanish, rather
grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and
knows !

DEAF AND DUMB

A GROUP BY WOOLNER

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows
aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its
light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest
white ;
So may a glory from defect arise :

Only by Deafness may the vexed Love
wreak
Its insuppressive sense on brow and
cheek,
Only by Dumbness adequately speak
As favoured mouth could never,
through the eyes.

NOTE TO PARACELSUS

THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the *Biographie Universelle*, Paris, 1822, which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

'PARACELSUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln (1), a little town in the canton of Schwitz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach, in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand Prior of the Order of Malta; consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends¹. It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Tritheim (2), and many German bishops.

'As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools; he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France, and Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismund Fugger, of Schwatz, to the discovery of the *Magnum Opus*.

'Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone (3). He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans, and conjurers, of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeys as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Trismegistus, from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

'The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of Ecolampadius (4), to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the

¹ I shall disguise M. Renaudin's next sentence a little. 'Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trinum a milite quodam, alii a sue exectum ferunt: constat imberbem illum, mulierumque osorem fuisse.' A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish as Melander's *Jocoseria*, &c. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith—e.g. 'Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit' (*De Medicina Nova*).

University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latches of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. "You shall follow me," cried he, "you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues, you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna¹, and whomsoever the Rhine and Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew; all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine²."

But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half-drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water (5).

At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate (6), he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist³. Accordingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his *Chronicle* to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hospital of St. Stephen (*Sebastian*, is meant), Sept. 24, 1541.—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a far tastic version of *Von Hohenheim*; Einsiedeln is the Latin Eremus, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Eremita: Bombast, his proper name, probably acquired,

¹ Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, 'mirum quod non et Garamantos, Indos et Anglos adjunxit.' Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary 'had heard somewhere,'—that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging 'Anglum quendam, Rogerium Baconem.'

² See his works *passim*. I must give one specimen.—'Somebody had been styling him 'Luther alter'; and why not?' (he asks, as he well might, 'Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you.—Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ad depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universæ academiciæ. Proditæ, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes podicem.' (Frag. Med.)

³ 'So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts.'

from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, Herbigopolis. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistolæ Familiares*, Hag. 1536: among others, by his staunch friend Cornelius Agrippa, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *De Occult. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to Agrippa's sojourn: 'Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud Herbigopolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabbalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissemus,' &c.

(3) 'Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco, diu persistere non patiebatur, sed mercurii instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supponebat et cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret' (Bitiskius, in *Præf.*). 'Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortalium neminem' (Melch. Adam, in *Vit. Germ. Medic.*). 'Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit; ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primum medicina perfecta videtur' (*Patri Rumi Orat. de Basilea*). His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: 'Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel fœminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tædii pigebit?' &c. (*Defensiones Septem adversus Emulos suos*, 1573, Def. 4ta, *De peregrinationibus et exilio*.)

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with Ecolampadius, then Divinity-Professor at Basil, that Zuinglius published, in 1528, an answer to Luther's *Confession of Faith*; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melancthon at Marburg. Their letters fill a large volume.—*D. D. Johannis Ecolampadii et Huldrici Zuinglii Epistolarum*, lib. quatuor, Bas. 1536. It must be also observed, that Zuinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the Mass was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of Ecolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—'About this time arose out of Luther's school one Ecolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence: him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine: which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the See of Rochester 20 years' (*Life of Bishop Fisher*, 1655). Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, &c., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso (*Elogij d' Huomini Letterati*, Ven. 1666) informs us that his

books were excommunicated by the Church. Quensledt (*de Patr. Doct.*) affirms 'nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est.' Delrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicar.*, classes him among those 'partim atheos, partim hæreticos' (lib. I, cap. 3). 'Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac durissime sonant in auribus vere Christiani' (*D. Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma de Tinct. Univ. Norimb.*, 1736). I shall only add one more authority:—'Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hæcenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hæere' (*Th. Erastus, Disputat. de Med. Nova*). These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatrum*, 'longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso) ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret.'

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: 'Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ cœvum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum' (Bitiskius). The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: 'Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpe narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam τετυφωμένος adsistens, apprehensò manibus capulo ensis, cujus κόλωμα hospitium præbuit ut aiunt spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit:—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant' (Melch. Adam). This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

Volpone, Act ii. Scene 2.

Bumbastus kept a Devil's bird
Shut in the pommel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks,
Of past and future mountebanks.

Hudibras, Part ii. Cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply '*laudanum suum*.' But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases, and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others:—'Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ prociutis a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam autoritatis summæ in Republica illa adit, et infamiae amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remedium suorum Theophrastus a fœda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinaque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivio suis testimonium' (Bitiskius)¹. It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterward

¹ The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select

repented of his treachery: 'Sed restituit tandem, et quem vivum convitilis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientia conversi pœnitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clausero exanimi quæ spiranti infixierant.' For these 'bites' of Oporinus, see *Disputat. Erasti*, and Andreas Jociscus *Oratio de vit. et ob. Opori*; for the 'remorse,' Mic. Toxita in *pref. Testamenti*, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus².

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, *De Philos^a et Philos^{um} sectis*, thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, 'De Chymia'—'Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus.' I suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise *De Phlebotomia*, and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work *De Natura Rerum*, on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, 'though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius' (see Holcroft's Translation, vol. iii. p. 179—'The Eyes'). While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (in *Præfat. in Paramyr.*) declares 'quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri.' 'O fecunditas ingenii!' adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol., Gen. 1658) 'rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus.' The rest were 'charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum.' 'Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodisse videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente servi cujusdem indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt,' says Valchtiis. These have been the study of a host of commentators, among whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, *Idea Medicinæ Philosophicæ*, Bas. 1571; Mic. Toxetis, *Onomastica*, Arg. 1574; Dornel, *Dict. Parac.*, Franc. 1584; and *Pi Philos^æ Compendium cum scholiis auctore Leone Suavio*, Paris. (This last a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued in extremis by the 'laudanum' of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit, in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred—(as he curiously says somewhere, 'Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professione tali, quæ a tam facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur?')—is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—'Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit,' *honoravit*, or *ordinavit*—for accounts differ.

the following, as explanatory of the property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries:—'Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas, citæ nimirum abbreviationem fortasse talibus accedere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur.' (Gabrielis Claudi Schediasma.)

² For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius's treatise—*Hermetis etc. Sapientia vindicata*, 1674. Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

INDEX TO FIRST LINES

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| A king lived long ago | 183 |
| Ah, did you once see Shelley plain | 49 |
| Ah, Love, but a day | 619 |
| All I believed is true | 59 |
| All June I bound the rose in sheaves | 42 |
| All's over, then : does truth sound bitter | 11 |
| All that I know | 33 |
| Among these latter busts we count by scores | 103 |
| As I ride, as I ride | 4 |
| 'As like as a Hand to another Hand' | 623 |
| Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead | 13 |
| Boot, saddle, to horse, and away | 2 |
| But do not let us quarrel any more | 130 |
| But give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow | 163 |
| Christ God, who savest men, save most | 55 |
| Cleon the poet, (from the sprinkled isles) | 153 |
| Day! Faster and more fast | 164 |
| Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave | 48 |
| Dear, had the world in its caprice | 44 |
| Escape me | 44 |
| Eyes, calm beside thee, (Lady, could'st thou know !) | 163 |
| Fear death ?—to feel the fog in my throat | 656 |
| Fee, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak | 101 |
| Fortù, Fortù, my beloved one | 65 |
| Give her but a least excuse to love me | 178 |
| Gone now ! All gone across the dark so far | 687 |

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Grand rough old Martin Luther | 75 |
| Grow old along with me | 636 |
| Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhor- rence | 7 |
| Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare | 17 |
| Hamelin Town 's in Brunswick | 78 |
| Heapcassia, sandal-buds and stripes | 476 |
| 'Heigho,' yawned one day King Francis | 60 |
| Here 's the garden she walked across | 5 |
| Here 's to Nelson's memory | 5 |
| Here was I with my arm and heart | 631 |
| Hist, but a word, fair and soft | 50 |
| How very hard it is to be | 515 |
| How well I know what I mean to do | 33 |
| I am a Goddess of the ambrosial courts | 115 |
| I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave | 123 |
| I could have painted pictures like that youth's | 122 |
| I dream of a red-rose tree | 46 |
| I hear a voice, perchance I heard | 450 |
| I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives | 158 |
| I leaned on the turf | 621 |
| I only knew one poet in my life | 113 |
| I said—Then, Dearest, since 'tis so | 76 |
| I send my heart up to thee, all my heart | 69 |
| I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he | 3 |
| I've a Friend over the sea | 63 |
| I will be quiet and talk with you | 620 |
| I wish that when you died last May | 660 |
| I wonder do you feel to-day | 40 |
| If one could have that little head of hers | 658 |
| Is all our fire of shipwreck wood | 619 |

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope | 9 |
| It once might have been, once only | 657 |
| It was roses, roses, all the way | 53 |
| June was not over | 42 |
| Just for a handful of silver he left us | 2 |
| Karshish, the picker-up of learning's crumbs | 117 |
| Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King | 1 |
| King Charles, and who'll do him right now | 1 |
| Let 's contend no more, Love | 12 |
| Let them fight it out, friend ! things have gone too far | 47 |
| Let us begin and carry up this corpse | 96 |
| Morning, evening, noon and night | 57 |
| My first thought was, he lied in every word | 108 |
| My heart sank with our Claret-flask | 5 |
| My love, this is the bitterest, that thou | 37 |
| Nay but you, who do not love her | 12 |
| Never any more | 45 |
| Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West died away | 26 |
| No, for I'll save it ! Seven years since | 635 |
| No more wine ? then we'll push back chairs and talk | 136 |
| Now, don't, sir ! Don't expose me ! Just this once | 659 |
| Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly | 8 |
| Of the million or two, more or less | 58 |
| Oh, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find | 18 |
| Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth | 623 |
| Oh, the beautiful girl, too white | 624 |
| Oh, to be in England | 25 |
| Oh, what a dawn of day | 15 |
| On the first of the Feast of Feasts | 686 |
| Only the prism's obstruction shows | 688 |
| Out of the little chapel I flung | 499 |
| Overhead the tree-tops meet | 188 |
| Over the sea our galleys went | 480 |
| Pauline, mine own, bend o'er me | 415 |

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Plague take all your pedants, say I | 6 |
| Quoth a young Sadducee | 163 |
| Room after room | 44 |
| Round the cape of a sudden came the sea | 12 |
| Said Abner, ' At last thou art come ! Ere I tell, ere thou speak ' | 26 |
| See, as the prettiest graves will do in time | 11 |
| She should never have looked at me | 10 |
| So far as our story approaches the end | 75 |
| So, I shall see her in three days | 44 |
| So, the year 's done with | 12 |
| Some people hang portraits up | 658 |
| Stand still, true poet that you are | 49 |
| Still ailing, Wind ? Wilt be appeased or no | 621 |
| Stop, let me have the truth of that | 629 |
| Stop playing, poet ! may a brother speak | 112 |
| Supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochene | 639 |
| Take the cloak from his face, and at first | 48 |
| That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers | 42 |
| That second time they hunted me | 54 |
| That 's my last Duchess painted on the wall | 54 |
| That was I, you heard last night | 41 |
| The grey sea and the long black land | 12 |
| The Lord, we look to once for all | 99 |
| The morn when first it thunders in March | 20 |
| The rain set early in to-night | 107 |
| The swallow has set her six young on the rail | 619 |
| The year 's at the spring | 171 |
| There is nothing to remember in me | 623 |
| There 's a palace in Florence, the world knows well | 104 |
| There 's heaven above, and night by night | 98 |
| There they are, my fifty men and women | 159 |
| This is a spray the Bird clung to | 41 |
| Thus the Mayne glideth | |
| Up jumped Tokay on our | |

| | PAGE | | PAGE |
|---|------|---|------|
| Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity . | 134 | Would it were I had been false, not you | 627 |
| What is he buzzing in my ears . | 655 | Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build . . | 634 |
| What 's become of Waring . . | 72 | | |
| Where the quiet coloured end of evening smiles | 14 | You know, we French stormed Ratisbon | 53 |
| Who will, may hear Sordello's story told | 527 | You'll love me yet!—And can tarry | 185 |
| 'Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best | 650 | You're my friend | 82 |
| Whence alike of will and way divine | 687 | Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees | 25 |
| 'Would a man 'scape the rod?' . | 163 | | |

